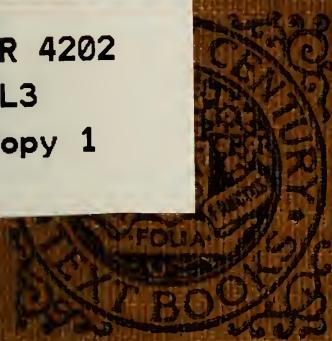


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SELECT POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING

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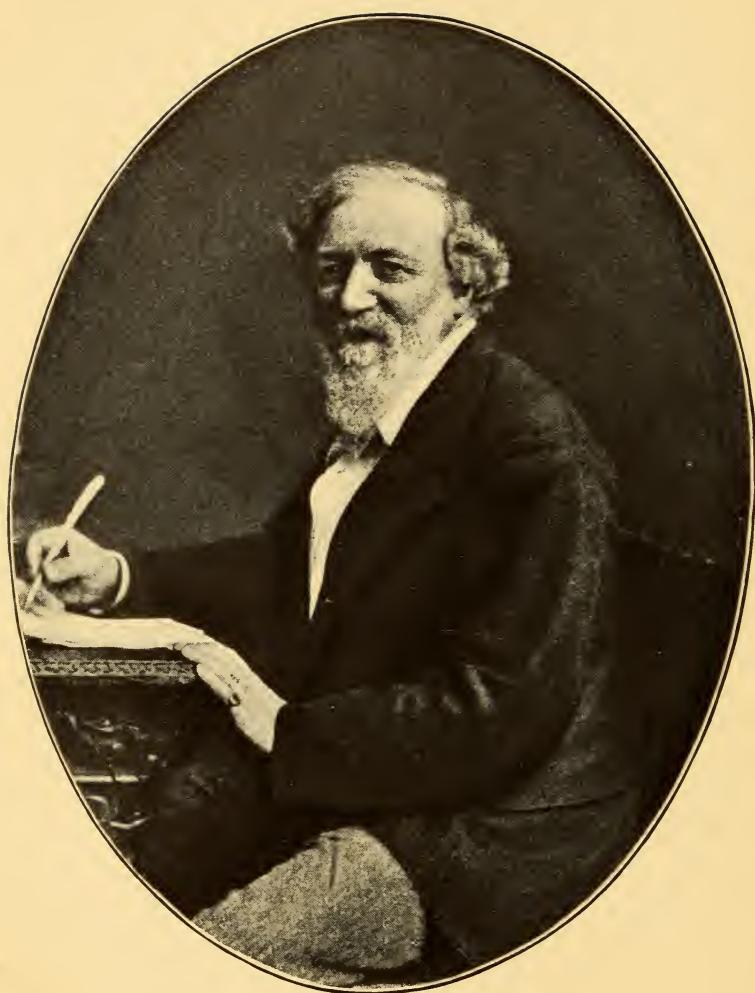
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TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS



TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS

SELECT POEMS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING
II

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFACE

The present work is mainly designed to fit the needs of secondary pupils. It contains all the poems covered by the college entrance examinations and, in addition, a number of others illustrating typical phases of the poet's work.

The editor once deemed it a virtue to send his pupils to the unabridged dictionary and other reference books for the meaning of strange words and allusions. Long experience has shown, however, that a majority of pupils must prepare their lessons without access to such books. Hence, the footnotes have been made sufficiently ample for a clear understanding of the language of the poems. The suggestive questions, most of which have been used in the editor's own classes, will help the pupil to grasp the dramatic side of the monologues and to appreciate the subtle delineation of character so typical of Browning.

Many authorities have been consulted in the preparation of this edition, but the editor has been especially helped by Mrs. Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, Dowden's *Robert Browning*, Sharp's *Life of Robert Browning*, Chesterton's *Robert Browning*, Corson's *Introduction to Browning*, Brooke's *Poetry of Robert Browning*, and the Camberwell edition of the poems. He wishes to acknowledge with especial gratitude his indebtedness to Professor Lucius A. Sherman of the University of Nebraska, to whom he owes his first inspiration

for the careful study of Browning. The suggestive questions follow Professor Sherman's well-known plan, and he has given the editor valuable criticism and advice in connection with their preparation.

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INTRODUCTION

I

BROWNING THE MAN

Robert Browning was born at Camberwell, a suburb of London, on May 7, 1812. At the time of his birth, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, and Charles Lamb were yet in their early forties, Byron had already written *Childe Harold* and *The Giaour*, and Shelley had just finished *Queen Mab*. "While Browning was a boy in Camberwell," says Chesterton, "Ruskin was solemnly visiting his solemn suburban aunts, Dickens was going to and fro in a blacking factory, and Keats had not yet become the assistant of a country surgeon." It was a notable period in English literature.

Browning's childhood was a happy one. Camberwell was then a bit of real country, where there were still green fields and wooded heights commanding widespread views. On holiday afternoons Robert particularly loved to seek the shade of three noble elms on a neighboring hill, where he would lie for hours, dreaming and looking toward the distant city. His father, though a successful clerk in the Bank of England, was at heart a poet. He was a wide reader and was well-versed in classical literature and medieval lore. He was fond of walking to and fro in the twilight with little Robert in his arms, often soothing him to sleep by humming bits

of Anacreon in the original Greek. He always retained a youthfulness of heart that must have made him a delightful companion. The poet tells us how his father taught him the story of the siege of Troy, using the piled-up chairs and tables for the walls of the city, the family cat for Helen, and the two dogs for Agamemnon and Menelaus. Sometimes, too, he and a friend would personate Hector and Achilles, hacking away at each other with sham swords and shouting out passages from the *Iliad*. The elder Browning was also a great verse-maker and taught Robert all his Latin declensions by joining them in a grotesque rhyme.

His mother, whom Carlyle called “the true type of a Scottish gentlewoman,” was of a delicately strung temperament and was deeply religious. She had a great love for music, a passion which the son inherited. Once when his mother was playing softly in the twilight she was startled to hear a sound behind her. She turned, and the next moment Robert was in her arms, sobbing passionately, “Play! play!” His sister also relates how Browning, while yet a very little boy, used to march around the dining-room table, shouting out metrical lines and beating the measure on the table.

Mrs. Orr tells us that Robert was “a handsome, vigorous, fearless child, and soon developed an unresting activity and a fiery temper.” He had a very energetic mind and was swift to learn. After spending the usual period in the dame-school he attended Mr. Ready’s academy in Peckham, where he remained until he was fourteen. Here he won no prizes, but was a leader among his fellows. He organized a dramatic company and sometimes had his schoolmates act plays which he had written himself. No doubt the most important part

of his education was received at home. Its very atmosphere fostered his love of music and painting. Every nook and corner of the house was crammed with books. These Robert read eagerly, thus "becoming early acquainted with subjects generally unknown to boys." Mrs. Orr gives us a most interesting list from the library, ranging from the first edition of *Robinson Crusoe* to the works of Voltaire.

The future poet fell first under the influence of Byron and at the age of twelve had already produced a small sheaf of Byronic verse, for which fortunately no publisher was found. Forty years later Browning was greatly amused to get back his youthful manuscript, which all these years had been in the possession of a friend of the family. When he was about fourteen years old Browning found a copy of Shelley's *Queen Mab* on a second-hand bookstand. He was so enthralled by it that he begged his mother to secure for him all the works of that poet. This she did, adding the three thin volumes of Keats, which had just been published. The poet tells us how, on the evening when he received the books, two nightingales strove against each other, one in the laburnum in his father's garden and the other in his neighbor's great copper beech. To his boyish imagination they seemed the spirits of the two poets whose verses he had just received. It was indeed a red-letter day in Browning's calendar, for it marked the dawn of a new poetic faith in him. Shelley was ever to him the "Sun-treader," from whom he drew high inspiration. Browning has beautifully voiced this feeling in his *Memorabilia*.

About this time Browning left Mr. Ready's school and began to study at home under a tutor. In 1829 he entered University College, London. One of his class-

mates says of him: “ I well remember the esteem and regard in which he was held by his fellow-students. He was a bright, handsome youth, with long black hair falling over his shoulders.” He was diligent in his studies, but was by no means a bookworm. He rode and danced and boxed and fenced like other healthy college boys. His attendance at the University, however, was brief. Soon after entering he discussed with his father the advisability of taking up writing as a profession. The father had been thwarted in his own youthful ambition for a higher education and an artistic career; so you may be sure that he was ready to help Robert follow his own bent. Browning, having deliberately chosen to be a poet, told his father that he felt that it would be better for him “ to see life in its best sense and cultivate the powers of the mind than to shackle himself at the very outset of his career by a laborious training foreign to that aim.” The elder Browning agreed with his son, who therefore left the University to obtain his further education from travel and from contact with the world of men and women. In later years, when asked whether he had been to Oxford or to Cambridge, he used to answer, “ Italy was my University.”

In the autumn of 1832, when Browning was but twenty years of age, he finished a poem which he called *Pauline*. At first its writing was kept a secret from all but his sister, but his aunt, hearing of it, said to him, “ I hear, Robert, that you have written a poem; here is the money to print it.” Accordingly, it was issued anonymously early the next year. Although the poem was generally neglected by the reading public, it received some favorable notice from the critics and some years later gained him the attention and friendship of

the eminent painter-poet, Rossetti. In the summer of 1835 *Paracelsus* was published at his father's expense. This poem was scarcely more popular than *Pauline* had been, but its publication was of great importance to the young poet, since it gained for him the friendship of the eminent critic, John Forster, and of such notable literary men as Leigh Hunt, Walter Savage Landor, Dickens, and Wordsworth. It also attracted the attention of the distinguished actor, Macready, who wrote in his Journal: "Read *Paracelsus*, a work of great daring, starred with poetry of thought, feeling, and diction, but occasionally obscure; the writer can scarcely fail to be a leading spirit of his time." At his solicitation Browning wrote for him a play, *Strafford*, which was produced at Covent Garden in 1837. Browning is described at this time as "slim, dark, and very handsome, and just a trifle of a dandy, addicted to lemon-colored kid gloves and such things, quite the 'glass of fashion and the mold of form.' But full of ambition, eager for success, eager for fame, and, what is more, determined to conquer fame and to achieve success."

In the autumn of 1833 Browning had spent a few months in Russia, but of this trip there is no trace in his works, if we except the tragic poem, *Ivàn Ivànovitch*, published nearly forty years later. The time had now come for the poet to take his first course in "his University"—Italy. In the summer of 1838 he sailed for that land, where he spent many happy days in Trieste, Venice, Padua, and "delicious Asolo." The last-named town is worthy of especial mention. It was "his first love among Italian cities," and he has immortalized its name through *Pippa Passes* and *Sordello*. He visited it again and again with increasing affection, and

dreamed in his old age of building there a summer home, which should be christened "Pippa's Tower." His dream was never fulfilled, for on the very night when the Municipality of Asolo voted to sell the poet the piece of land which he desired, his spirit took flight. Among the poems we are to study we shall find two memorials of this voyage, *Home Thoughts from the Sea* and *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. The first of these was inspired by the poet's passage through the Straits of Gibraltar, and the other was penciled on the fly-leaf of a book, while the vessel lay becalmed off the coast of Africa and the poet was yearning for a gallop on his good horse, "York."

Browning's chief purpose in visiting Italy had been to gain warmth and color for the setting of his new work, *Sordello*. This poem, "the history of a soul by the soul's greatest historian," was published in the following year. The coldness with which it was received by all but a narrow circle of choice spirits in no wise discouraged Browning, who now began to pour forth a steady stream of poetry, which was not to cease for nearly half a century. In 1841 *Pippa Passes*, the most exquisite of his dramatic poems, appeared. It formed the first number of *Bells and Pomegranates*, a series of eight thin pamphlets published during the next six years. This series has a special interest for us, since it contains nine of the poems which we are to study.

There now came into the poet's life a new force, destined to exert much influence upon his future work. He had often heard of the poet, Elizabeth Barrett, from their common friend, John Kenyon, and greatly admired her writings. Mr. Kenyon begged him to write to her and tell her how her poetry had impressed him, "for,"

he said, "she is a great invalid, and sees no one, but great souls jump at sympathy." Out of the ensuing correspondence grew an acquaintance and friendship, which soon ripened into love. But Miss Barrett was a couch-ridden invalid, closely hedged in by an eccentric father, who strenuously objected to any of his children's marrying. In the fall of 1846 her physician announced that the only hope of her recovery lay in her removal to Italy, but her father obstinately refused to permit her to go. The poet-lovers took what seemed the only alternative and were quietly married without his consent. They went almost immediately to Italy, where they finally settled down in the fine old palace of Casa Guidi in Florence. Here the two poets worked together at their noble craft, the finest fruit of Mrs. Browning's genius being the so-called *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. In 1850 Browning published *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*. This was followed in 1855 by *Men and Women*, that group of noble poems which Rossetti called his "Elixir of Life." Among these are several of the poems we are to study.

Bayard Taylor, who visited the Brownings in 1851, has given us a vivid picture of the poet: "His dark hair was already streaked with gray about the temples. His complexion was fair, with perhaps the faintest olive tinge, eyes large, clear, and gray, nose strong and well-cut, mouth full and rather broad, and chin pointed though not prominent. His forehead broadened rapidly upward from the outer angle of the eye, slightly re-treating."

The winter of 1855 found the Brownings in Paris, where Mrs. Browning in impaired health worked furiously on *Aurora Leigh*, which was published the

following autumn with instant success. The next five years were a constant battle against encroaching disease, the end coming in the summer of 1861 at Casa Guidi. During these years Browning was the devoted companion and nurse of his wife and in consequence produced practically nothing.

After his wife's death, Browning, feeling that he could no longer bear to live in Florence, returned to England. In 1864 he published *Dramatis Personae*, adding other speaking figures to his "fifty men and women" of 1855. Some years before the poet had found on a Florentine bookstand "a square yellow book," which he had bought "for eight-pence just." This volume, part print and part manuscript, contained the annotated story of the Franceschini murder case. "When I had read the book," says Browning, "my plan was at once settled. I went for a walk, gathered twelve pebbles from the road, and put them at equal distances on the parapet that bordered it. Those represented the twelve chapters into which the poem is divided, and I adhered to the arrangement to the last." It was eight years, however, before he published the first two numbers of *The Ring and the Book*, which Carlyle pronounced "one of the most wonderful poems ever written."

In America Browning had long had a wide circle of readers, and in grateful recognition of this had consented to the original publication of *Gold Hair*, *Prospice*, and *Under the Cliff* in the *Atlantic Monthly*. With the publication of *Dramatis Personae* there set in with the "British public" a tide of popularity which has never subsided. For over three decades he had gone serenely on, equally unmindful of caustic criticism and cold neglect. "I have taken my own course," he wrote in 1865,

“ pleasing myself, or aiming at doing so, and thereby, I hope, pleasing God.” Now booksellers strove for the privilege of publishing *The Ring and the Book*, and “ the R. B. who for six months did not sell one copy of his poems was now offered all the profits for the incidental advantages of his name.” A second edition of the poem followed closely on the first, and nine new volumes of his poetry appeared in as many years. In 1871 a publisher paid him a hundred guineas for the single ballad of *Hervé Riel*, and sold fourteen hundred copies of it in the first five days after its issue! Oxford and Cambridge bestowed upon him degrees and he was twice offered the Lord Rectorship of St. Andrews University. Fate, more kind to him than to many another poet, had decreed that he should live on for more than twenty years, surrounded by an ever-widening circle of friends and hailed as one of the foremost literary men of his age.

Browning kept up his work with astonishing vigor, his last poem, *Asolando*, being published on the day of his death, which occurred in the Rezzonico Palace, Venice, on the 12th of December, 1889. Shortly before the great bell of San Marco’s began to toll the hour of ten, the dying poet asked if there were any news from England. His son read him a telegram telling of the great demand for his latest work. He smiled and murmured, “ How gratifying! ” and with the last toll of San Marco’s bell passed away.

The Municipality of Venice granted civic honors to the dead poet. “ Never in modern times,” says Sharp, “ has Venice afforded a more impressive sight than those draped processional-gondolas following the high flower-strewn funeral barge through the thronged water-ways

and out across the lagoon to the desolate Isle of the Dead.” Browning had expressed a wish to be buried in Italy beside his wife, but, in response to popular demand, he was finally laid to rest in Poets’ Corner of Westminster Abbey to the music of his wife’s poem, “He giveth His beloved sleep.”

Asolo placed a mural tablet on the house which Browning had occupied, and Venice affixed a memorial tablet to the wall of the Rezzonico Palace bearing the following inscription:

A

ROBERTO BROWNING

MORTO EN QUESTO PALAZZO

IL 12 DICEMBRE 1889

VENEZIE

POSE

Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, “Italy.”

II

BROWNING THE POET

As you have seen, Browning won his way slowly with the public. Men of genius often have this experience when their work is distinctly different from that of their fellow artists. When Corot began to paint his marvelous landscapes his method was so startlingly different from that of his contemporaries, that his work met with no recognition except from a select few. Not till he was nearly seventy years of age did he gain even a small

measure of the reward due to his genius. To-day he is acknowledged an inimitable master of landscape painting. Like originality, both in matter and in manner of presentation, explains much of the early neglect of Browning.

His subject matter often presents difficulty to the reader. He is interested in inner life rather than in outer action. He likes to reveal, as in a lightning flash, some great crisis in a human life, when "contending forces come nobly to the grapple" and try the mettle of the soul. His typical attitude is indicated in his dedication to *Sordello*: "My stress lay on incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study." Among poets he stands second only to Shakespeare in masterly delineation of character. At the same time he lacks Shakespeare's universality and often presents strange and even abnormal types, since these afford him the striking soul-situations he is so fond of depicting.

In seeking expression for his conceptions of human character, Browning invented a new literary form, the dramatic monologue. This was his favorite mode of presentation, and most of the poems we shall study here are of this type. The dramatic monologue differs radically from the soliloquy, in which some one merely thinks aloud in a rather absurd fashion. In the dramatic monologue only one person speaks, but his speech reveals the presence of one or more listeners, and often suggests their actions and words. Sometimes the speaker, while revealing his own soul, portrays even more vividly the character of some other person, absent or present. For instance, in *My Last Duchess* the brief self-revealing story told by the cold proud Duke of Ferrara calls up in the mind a most moving picture of his

gentle flower-like Duchess. Again, in the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister* the malignant monk reveals through his very jealousy and hatred the simplicity and kindness of Brother Lawrence.

When we read a drama or see it performed, the plot unfolds and the characters develop before our eyes. These dramatic monologues demand much more of the imagination, since we find in them neither plot nor development of character. They often begin most abruptly, and upon the first reading the mind must hold many ideas in suspense till the very end. Take, for instance, our first poem, *How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. The speaker is already well into his story. The opening words,

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three,

leave us to fill in all details, with no help but the enigmatic title and sub-title. We must read on for some stanzas before we begin to grasp the situation. Upon a second reading, however, we visualize the speaker and his eager circle of listeners, and may see him as he stands with one hand on Roland's mane, while the horse reaches round his head for a petting. Again, in the *Incident of the French Camp* the poet leaves us to imagine the French veteran whose story begins so abruptly. As the poem grows familiar we may see him standing Napoleon-wise before the hearth of some old French inn or by some Canadian camp-fire, but of this there is no direct hint in the poem. We see, then, that most of these poems must be approached dramatically. We must visualize the speaker in the manner just suggested and must interpret his words accordingly.

Professor Corson in his admirable analysis of *My Last Duchess*¹ has shown the effectiveness of this method of approach. He says of the closing lines of the poem:

The last ten verses illustrate well the poet's skillful management of his difficult art-form. After the envoy has had his look at the portrait, the Duke, thinking it time to return to his guests, says, "Will't please you rise, We'll meet the company below, then." His next speech, which indicates what he has been talking about during the envoy's study of the picture, must be understood as uttered while they are moving toward the stairway. The next, "Nay, we'll go together down, sir," shows that they have reached the head of the stairway, and that the envoy has politely motioned the Duke to lead the way down. This is implied in the "Nay." The last speech indicates that on the stairway is a window which affords an outlook into the courtyard, where he calls the attention of the envoy to a Neptune, taming a sea-horse, cast in bronze for him by Claus of Innsbruck. The pride of the virtuoso is also implied in the word "though."

While interest in the human soul is ever first with Browning, he is not blind to the beauties of the outer world. Among the selections you are to study you will find his love of Nature reflected in *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, in *De Gustibus*, and in one of Pippa's songs. His attitude toward Nature, however, differs from that of Burns and Wordsworth and Tennyson. All these see in Nature a human soul and give to her children human thoughts and feelings. To Browning Nature is a power apart from and above us, "a form of the creative joy of God." With her he feels himself "face to face with Infinitude." Burns has a keen sympathy for the untimely fate of the mountain daisy and sees in the little field-mouse a "poor earth-born companion and fellow-mortal." Wordsworth, wandering lonely, grows

¹ Introduction to Browning, pp. 86-90.

gay in the jocund company of the daffodils, and his heart joins in their sprightly dance. Of this close fellowship with Nature's brood there is little in Browning. He, too, feels the joyous side of Nature, but he views her children apart. This attitude is illustrated by the following lines from *Gerard de Lairesse* in *Parleyings with Certain People*:

Dance, yellows and whites and reds,
Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, and heads,
Astir with wind in the tulip beds.

There's sunshine; scarcely a wind at all
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small
On a certain mound by the churchyard wall.

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows,
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellows:
Dance, you reds and whites and yellows.

Observe that it is purely their association with the "mound by the churchyard wall" that leads the poet to take to his heart the "starved grass and daisies small."

In Browning, Nature, with a life of her own, is often but a background emphasizing some experience of a human soul. You will find this strikingly illustrated in *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*. Here the grass

grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin black blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.

Along the black eddies of the serpent river "low scrubby alders kneeled," and "drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit of mute despair." A "palsied oak" gaped at the hero and a "great black bird sailed past," while all around

The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay
Chin upon hand to see the game at bay.

Read the poem, and see how perfectly Nature is made to reflect the soul-crisis there presented.

While Browning is especially fond of using Nature as a background for human passion, he has given us many exquisite bits of pure description. Most lovers of Browning know the verses from *Meeting at Night*:

The gray seas and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Scarcely inferior to this is the description of spring in *Paracelsus*:

The grass grows bright, the bows are swoln with blooms
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The dorrs are busy, beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe of nestling limpets.

Again, note the vivid color-tones of this tropical picture from *A Lover's Quarrel*:

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
Miles and miles of gold and green
Where the sunflowers blow
In a solid glow,
And — to break now and then the screen —
Black neck and eye-balls keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between.

Browning's great love of animals is evinced, not only by such poems as *Tray*, *Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr*, and *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, but by his vivid pictures of animal life. Speaking in the person of Karshish, the Arab physician, he tells how

A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear,

and how a certain spider

Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back.

He makes Caliban tell of

Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown,
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants.

Note this picture from *The Flight of the Duchess*:

Early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag has to break with his foot, of a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice.

And this from *By the Fireside*:

A small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a ball; against noonday glare
You count the streaks and rings.

Stopford A. Brooke, in his exhaustive study of Browning's treatment of Nature,¹ has shown that there was a well-defined development in this phase of his poetry. The critic points out that, during the first half of Browning's work, the love of Nature, though always less than his love of human nature, was closely intertwined with it, "both linked together in a noble marriage." This was the time of Browning's best work, when he gave to the world his *Dramatic Lyrics and Romances*, his dramas, *Dramatis Personae*, and *Men and Women*. *The Ring and the Book* is starred with a few of Browning's finest pieces of natural description, but in the period following its production his interest in human nature almost entirely drove out his love of Nature. To this time belong such poems as *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* and *The Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*. Finally, as Brooke shows, the love of Nature returned with diminished power, bringing with it some of the passion and music of his earlier verse. Illustrations of this new expression of his love of Nature may be found in *La Saisiaz*, in certain of the *Dramatic Idyls*, and in *Gerard de Lairesse*, from which we have already quoted.²

Browning's keen sense of humor flashes out repeatedly in his work, occasionally finding expression in complete poems. One of the best of these is *Up at a Villa — Down in the City*, which we are to study. Another admirable example is his *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*. The grotesque turn which his humor often takes is illustrated by his description of the queer old German wine-jug in *Nationality in Drinks*:

¹ The Poetry of Robert Browning, Chap. III.

² Page 22.

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
 Like a pygmy castle-warder,
 Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
 Arms and accoutrements all in order ;
 And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling South,
 Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
 Cocked his flap-hat with the toss-pot feather,
 Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
 Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
 Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
 And then, with an impudence nought could abash,
 Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the beholder,
 For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder :
 And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
 And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
 Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting.

From first to last the dominant note of Browning's poetry is optimism. "There never shall be one lost good." Evil itself may yield good; apparent defeat may conceal a sublime spiritual victory. The patriot who goes friendless to the scaffold with the consciousness of duty done may be safer than he who drops dead in the hour of triumph. The poet bids us

welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids, nor sit nor stand, but go.

He holds that this life serves but to test and train us for a wider life beyond, is

just a stuff
 To try the soul's strength on.

Turn Browning's pages almost at random and you will see how this inspiring belief permeates his poetry, deepening and strengthening with the passing years. In his

first poem, *Pauline*, his hero, realizing at the close of a life of disappointment that earth with its failures is but the threshold of a wider existence, says:

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth
And love. . . .

Know my last state is happy, free from doubt
Or touch of fear.

The dying Paracelsus, baffled in all his aspirations, yet feels secure of the future because, even in his basest moments, he has never ceased to aspire. He clasps the hand of his friend and says with his last breath:

If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendor, soon or late
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.

Later we find the same thought more sublimely expressed in *Apparent Failure*. Thirty years after writing *Paracelsus* the mature and world-wise Browning, musing over the gruesome suicides of the Paris morgue, apparently Earth's most hopeless failures, still can say:

My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blest once, prove accurst.

Turn now to *Abt Vogler*, "the song of triumph of devout old age":

There never shall be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
 What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more.
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.

On the last day of the poet's earthly life his final trumpet call rang out to inspire the world. In the *Epilogue to Asolando* he sums up his creed, avowing himself

One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
 Never doubted clouds would break,
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Here we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

Of these lines Berdoe has well said: “ Had he known when he wrote them that these were the last lines of his message to the world, that he who had for so many years urged men to ‘ strive and thrive — fight on ! ’ would pass away as they were given to the world, would he have wished to close his life’s work with braver, better, nobler words than these ? All of Browning is here.”

III

CRITICAL COMMENTS

Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world’s,
 Therefore on him no speech ! and brief for thee,
 Browning ! Since Chaucer was alive and hale
 No man has walked along our rod with step
 So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
 So varied in discourse. But warmer climes
 Give brighter plumage, stronger wing : the breeze
 Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on

Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song.

— WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

I do heartily desire the spread of the study and the influence of Robert Browning; for, having lived some years with Chaucer and Shakespeare, to try to know what a Man is, and what a Poet is, I declare that Browning is the manliest, the strongest, the life fullest, the deepest, and the thought fullest living poet, the one most needing earnest study, and the one most worthy of it.
— F. J. FURNIVALL.

I take him to be the chief poet of our age: chief, because he, more than any other, perceived the needs and yearnings of this restless period and set himself to supply them. He never aimed at popularity, success was in no wise his ambition; he was content with the judgment of his peers and could afford to wait for the verdict of the populace. I hold him to be chief, also because he, of all modern writers, so largely possessed the prophetic, or seeing, power. This it is that places him far above more melodious-voiced songsters.— EDWARD BERDOE.

Through all his works Browning speaks of Life. There is not a whine in all his poetry. The most despicable character in his dramas never asks, “Is life worth living?” To him who longs for death, he cries, “Have you ever lived? . . . Browning holds that when you strive toward work you grow toward God. If you try and fall short you have not tried in vain. Our efforts are all gain to the individual soul; seeking after love has eternal value.

“ There shall never be one lost good ! What was shall live as before ;

On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven a perfect round .”

— HIRAM CORSON.

Robert Browning is unerring in every sentence he writes of the Middle Ages ; always vital, right, and profound ; so that in the matter of art . . . there is hardly a principle connected with the mediæval temper, that he has not struck upon in those careless and too rugged rhymes of his. . . .

I know of no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines [*The Bishop Orders His Tomb in St. Praxed's Church*] of the Renaissance spirit,— its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I said of the Central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice* put into as many lines, Browning's being also the antecedent work.— RUSKIN.

The dust of the dead Keats and Shelley turned to flower seed in the brain of the young poet. . . . There has been nothing in the pastoral kind written so delightfully as *Pippa Passes* since the days of the Jacobean dramatists. . . . The figure of Pippa herself, the unconscious messenger of good spiritual tidings to so many souls in dark places, is one of the most beautiful that Browning has produced, and in at least one of the more serious scenes — that between Sebald and Ottima — he reaches a tragic height that places him on a level with

the greatest modern dramatists. Of the lyrical interludes and seed-pearls of song scattered through the scenes, it is a commonplace to say that nothing more exquisite or natural was ever written, or rather warbled.
— EDMUND GOSSE.

The great English poets who are supposed to have cared more for form than Browning did, cared less at least in this sense—that they were content to use old forms so long as they were certain that they had new ideas. Browning, on the other hand, no sooner had a new idea than he tried to make a new form to express it. . . . If we study Browning honestly, nothing will strike us more than that he really created a large number of quite novel and quite admirable artistic forms. . . . *The Ring and the Book*, for example, is an illustration of a departure in literary method—the method of telling the same story several times and trusting to the variety of human character to turn it into several different and equally interesting stories. *Pippa Passes*, to take another example, is a new and most fruitful form, a series of detached dramas, connected only by the presence of one fugitive and isolated figure. The invention of these things is not merely like the writing of a good poem—it is something like the invention of the sonnet or the Gothic arch. The poet who makes them does not merely create himself—he creates other poets.
— GILBERT K. CHESTERTON.

The universe of what we call matter in all its forms, which is the definition of Nature as I speak of it here, is one form to Browning of the creative joy of God: we are another form of the same joy. Nor does Browning con-

ceive, as Wordsworth conceived, of any pre-established harmony between us and the natural world, so that Humanity and Nature can easily converse and live together; so that we can express our thoughts and emotions in terms of Nature; or so that Nature can have, as it were, a human soul. That is not Browning's conception. . . .

Nature is alive in Browning, but she is not humanized at all, nor at all at one with us. Tennyson does not make her alive, but he does humanize her. The other poets of the century do make her alive, but they harmonize her in one way or another with us. Browning is distinct from them all in keeping her quite divided from man. . . .

Nature, then, has a life of her own, her own joys and sorrows, or rather, only joy. . . . He did not impute a personality like ours to Nature, but he saw joy and rapture and play, even love, moving in everything; and sometimes he added to this delight she has in herself—and just because the creature was not human—a touch of elemental unmoral malice, a tricksome sportiveness like that of Puck in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.—STOPFORD BROOKE, *The Poetry of Robert Browning*.

Mr. Browning's genius is dramatic because it always expresses itself in the forms of real life, in the supposed experiences of men and women. These men and women are usually in a state of mental disturbance or conflict: indeed, they think much more than they act. But their thinking tends habitually to a practical result; and it keeps up our sense of their reality by clothing itself always in the most practical and picturesque language which thought can assume. It has been urged that he does not sink himself in his characters as a completely

dramatic writer should; and this argument must stand for what it is worth. His personality may in some degree be constructed from his works; it is, I think, generally admitted, that that of Shakespeare cannot; and in so far as this is a test of a complete dramatist, Mr. Browning fails of being one. He does not sink himself in his men and women, for his sympathy with them is too active to admit of it. He not only describes their different modes of being, but defends them from their own point of view; and it is natural that he should often select for this treatment characters with which he is already disposed to sympathize. But his women are no less living and no less distinctive than his men; and he sinks his individuality at all times enough to interest us in the characters which are not akin to his own as much as in those which are. Even if it were otherwise, if his men and women were all variations of himself, as imagined under differences of sex, of age, of training, or of condition, he would still be dramatic in this essential quality, the only one which bears on our contention: that everything which, as a poet, he thinks or feels, comes from him in a dramatic, that is to say, a completely living form.—MRS. SUTHERLAND ORR.

IV

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1812. Born at Camberwell, London.
- 1829. Enters University College, London.
- 1832. Writes *Pauline*, published in 1833.
- 1833. Travels in Russia.
- 1835. *Paracelsus*.
- 1836. *Porphyria* and other poems in *Monthly Repository*.
- 1837. *Strafford*, his first drama, produced at Covent Garden.

1838. Visits Italy.

1840. *Sordello*.

1841. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. I, *Pippa Passes*.

1842. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. II, *King Victor and King Charles*; No. III, *Dramatic Lyrics*.

1843. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. IV, *The Return of the Druses*, a tragedy in five acts; No. V, *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, a tragedy in three acts.

1844. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. VI, *Colombe's Birthday*, a play in five acts.
The Boy and the Angel and three other poems in *Hood's Magazine*.

1845. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. VII, *Dramatic Lyrics and Romances*.

1846. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. VIII, *Luria and A Soul's Tragedy*.
Marries Elizabeth Barrett.

1847. Establishes a home in Italy.

1849. New edition of his poetical works.

1850. *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*.

1852. *Introductory Essay to Shelley's Letters*.

1854. The Twins in *Two Poems*, the other being by Mrs. Browning.

1855. *Men and Women*.

1857. *May and Death* in *The Keepsake*.

1863. Third edition of his poetical works.

1864. *Gold Hair*, *Prospice*, and *Under the Cliff* in the *Atlantic Monthly*.
Dramatis Personae.
Fourth edition of his poetical works.

1866. Edits his wife's poems.

1868. New edition of his poetical works.

1868-69. *The Ring and the Book*.

1871. *Hervé Riel* in the *Cornhill Magazine*.
Baulastion's Adventure.
Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

1872. *Fifine at the Fair*.

1872-74. First American edition of his works, reprinted by the Chicago and Alton R. R. from the latest English edition. A copy is in the British Museum.

1873. Red Cotton Nightcap Country.
 1875. Aristophanes' Apology.
 The Inn Album.
 1876. Pacchiarotto and other Poems.
 1877. The Agamemnon of Aeschylus.
 1878. La Saisiaz: The two Poets of Croisic.
 1879-80. Dramatic Idyls.
 1883. Jocoseria.
 1884. Ferishtah's Fancies.
 1887. Parleyings with Certain People of Importance.
 1889. Asolando.
 Dies at Venice.

V

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HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, 10
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

"T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;

Ghent: A town in Belgium on the Scheldt River.

5. postern: A small gate, or door, beside the large gate in a fortified place.

10. pique: Peak or point; here, the pommel of the saddle.

14. Lokeren: A town about twelve miles from Ghent. This town and the others mentioned in the poem lie along the way from Ghent to Aix, at intervals of from twelve to twenty-four miles, the whole distance being over ninety miles.

And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, “ Yet there is time ! ”

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye’s black intelligence,— ever that glance
O’er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, “ Stay spur !
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault’s not in her,
We’ll remember at Aix ”— for one heard the quick
wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;

17. **Mecheln church-steeple:** The church-steeple is the lofty (324 feet) though unfinished tower of the Cathedral of St. Rombold.— *Rolfe*.

29. **spume-flakes:** Foam-flakes.

31. **Hasselt:** A town about eighty miles from Ghent. Had not Roos “ galloped bravely ”?

32. **Roos:** Dutch for “ Rose.”

The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
 chaff; 40

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
 And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
 Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
 And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
 Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall.
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
 Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or
 good,
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
 Was no more than his due who brought good news from
 Ghent. 60

46. **her fate:** The poet imagines Aix in a state of siege and on the verge of falling. See line 28.

49. **buff-coat:** A stout coat of buff leather, worn by soldiers.

50. **jack-boots:** Boots reaching above the knee; worn in the 17th century by soldiers.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

As I ride, as I ride,
 With a full heart for my guide,
 So its tide rocks my side,
 As I ride, as I ride,
 That, as I were double-eyed,
 He, in whom our Tribes confide,
 Is descreed, ways untried,
 As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
 To our Chief and his Allied, 10
 Who dares chide my heart's pride
 As I ride, as I ride?
 Or are witnesses denied —
 Through the desert waste and wide
 Do I glide unespied
 As I ride, as I ride?

As I ride, as I ride,
 When an inner voice has cried,
 The sands slide, nor abide
 (As I ride, as I ride) 20
 O'er each visioned homicide
 That came vaunting (has he lied?)
 To reside — where he died,
 As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
 Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,

Metidja: An extensive plain commencing on the eastern side of the Bay of Algiers and stretching inland to the south and west.

5. As: *As* is here equivalent to *as if*.

Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
 As I ride, as I ride,
 Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
 — Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed —
 How has vied stride with stride
 As I ride, as I ride!

30

As I ride, as I ride,
 Could I loose what Fate has tied,
 Ere I pried, she should hide
 (As I ride, as I ride)
 All that's meant me — satisfied
 When the Prophet and the Bride
 Stop veins I'd have subside
 As I ride, as I ride!

40

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
 A mile or so away,
 On a little mound, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day ;
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

30. **Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed:** Explain.

38. **the Prophet and his Bride:** Mohammed and his wife, Ayesha. Mohammed held that she would still be his wife in Paradise.

1. **Ratisbon:** An Austrian town, stormed by Napoleon in 1809. Its German name is Regensburg.

7. **prone:** bending forward.

Just as perhaps he mused “ My plans
 That soar, to earth may fall,
 Let once my army-leader Lannes
 Waver at yonder wall,”—
 Out ’twixt the battery-smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound
 Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
 Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
 And held himself erect
 By just his horse’s mane, a boy :
 You hardly could suspect —
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,
 Scarce any blood came through)
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

“ Well,” cried he, “ Emperor, by God’s grace
 We’ve got you Ratisbon !
 The Marshal’s in the market-place,
 And you’ll be there anon
 To see your flag-bird flap his vans
 Where I, to heart’s desire,
 Perched him ! ” The chief’s eye flashed ; his plans
 Soared up again like fire.

The chief’s eye flashed ; but presently
 Softened itself, as sheathes
 A film the mother-eagle’s eye
 When her bruised eaglet breathes ;

11. **Lannes**: One of Napoleon’s marshals.

29. **vans**: Wings.

34. What is the subject of *sheathes*?

“ You’re wounded! ” “ Nay, ” the soldier’s pride
 Touched to the quick, he said:
 “ I’m killed, Sire! ” And his chief beside,
 Smiling the boy fell dead. 40

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN
 A CHILD’S STORY

(Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger)

I

HAMELIN¹ Town’s in Brunswick,
 By famous Hanover city;
 The river Weser, deep and wide,
 Washes its wall on the southern side;
 A pleasanter spot you never spied;
 But, when begins my ditty,
 Almost five hundred years ago,
 To see the townsfolk suffer so
 From vermin, was a pity.

II

Rats! 10
 They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
 And bit the babies in the cradles,
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
 And licked the soup from the cooks’ own ladles,
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men’s Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women’s chats
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
 In fifty different sharps and flats. 20

1. Hamelin: A town of Hanover, Prussia.

III

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
“ ‘Tis clear,” cried they, “ our Mayor’s a noddie;
And as for our Corporation — shocking
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can’t or won’t determine
What’s best to rid us of our vermin!
You hope, because you’re old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease?
Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we’re lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we’ll send you packing! ”
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sat in council;
At length the Mayor broke silence:
“For a guilder I’d my ermine gown sell,
I wish I were a mile hence!
It’s easy to bid one rack one’s brain —
I’m sure my poor head aches again,
I’ve scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap! ”
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber-door but a gentle tap?
“Bless us,” cried the Mayor, “what’s that? ”
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little, though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister

28. **obese**: Exceedingly fat.

37. **guilder**: The monetary unit of Holland, value about forty cents.

Than a too-long-opened oyster,
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous 50
 For a plate of turtle, green and glutinous)
 "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
 Anything like the sound of a rat
 Makes my heart go pit-a-pat! "

V

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
 And in did come the strangest figure!
 His queer long coat from heel to head
 Was half of yellow and half of red,
 And he himself was tall and thin,
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin, 60
 With light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
 No tuft on cheek, nor beard on chin,
 But lips where smiles went out and in;
 There was no guessing his kith and kin:
 And nobody could enough admire
 The tall man and his quaint attire.
 Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
 Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
 Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

VI

He advanced to the council-table: 70
 And, "Please your honors," said he, "I'm able,
 By means of a secret charm, to draw
 All creatures living beneath the sun,
 That creep or swim or fly or run,
 After me so as you never saw!
 And I chiefly use my charm
 On creatures that do people harm,

68. **Trump of Doom:** The trumpet of the Day of Judgment.

The mole and toad and newt and viper;
 And people call me the Pied Piper."
 (And here they noticed round his neck 80
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
 To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying,
 As if impatient to be playing
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)

" Yet," said he, " poor piper as I am,
 In Tartary I freed the Cham,
 Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats; 90
 I eased in Asia the Nizam
 Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:
 And as for what your brain bewilders,
 If I can rid your town of rats
 Will you give me a thousand guilders? "

" One? fifty thousand! "— was the exclamation
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII

Into the street the Piper stept,
 Smiling first a little smile;
 As if he knew what magic slept 100
 In his quiet pipe the while;
 Then, like a musical adept,
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;

79. **Pied:** Mottled, of variegated colors.

89. **Cham:** Khan, the ruler of Tartary.

91. **Nizam:** The native ruler of Hyderabad, India.

92. **vampire-bats:** Blood-sucking bats.

And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
 You heard as if an army muttered;
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. 110
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
 Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
 Families by tens and dozens,
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —
 Followed the Piper for their lives.
 From street to street he piped advancing,
 And step for step they followed dancing, 120
 Until they came to the river Weser,
 Wherein all plunged and perished!
 — Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
 Swam across and lived to carry
 (As he, the manuscript he cherished)
 To Rat-land home his commentary:
 Which was, “ At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
 I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
 And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
 Into a cider-press’s gripe: 130
 And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
 And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
 And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
 And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:

123-125. An allusion to a legend which Froude pronounces “more absurd than legends usually are.” According to this story, Julius Cæsar, when compelled to abandon his sinking ship at the siege of Alexandria, held the manuscript of his *Commentaries* above the water with one hand and swam with the other.

And it seemed as if a voice
 (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
 Is breathed) called out, ' Oh rats, rejoice !
 The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !
 So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon ! ' 140
 And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
 All ready staved, like a great sun shone
 Glorious scarce an inch before me,
 Just as methought it said, ' Come, bore me ! '
 — I found the Weser rolling o'er me.''

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
 " Go," cried the Mayor, " and get long poles,
 Poke out the nests and block up the holes !
 Consult with carpenters and builders, 150
 And leave in our town not even a trace
 Of the rats ! "— when suddenly, up the face
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
 With a, " First, if you please, my thousand guilders ! "

IX

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;
 So did the Corporation too.
 For council dinners made rare havoc
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;
 And half the money would replenish
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
 With a gypsy coat of red and yellow !

139. **nuncheon**: A piece of food sufficient for a luncheon.

158. **Claret, Moselle, . . . Rhenish**: Varieties of wine.

X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
" No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !
I've promised to visit by dinner-time
Bagdat, and accept the prime
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor :
With him I proved no bargain-driver,
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver !
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe after another fashion." 180

xi

“ How? ” cried the Mayor, “ d’ye think I brook
Being worse treated than a Cook?
Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?

179. Caliph: The spiritual and civil head of a Mohammedan state.

182. **stiver**: A Dutch coin of a value of about two cents.

187. **ribald**: A coarse and vulgar person.

You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst! ''

190

XII

Once more he stept into the street,
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning

Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling;
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering, 200
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.

All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by, 210
— Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!

210

However, he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
“ He never can cross that mighty top !
He’s forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop ! ”
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern were suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced, and the children followed,
And when all were in, to the very last, 230
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say all ? No ! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way ;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say,—
“ It’s dull in our town since my playmates left !
I can’t forget that I’m bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, 240
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new ;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles’ wings :
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured, 250
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the hill,

Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more! ”

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that Heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy a rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!

260

The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,

Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.

But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavor,
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,
They made a decree that lawyers never

Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
“ And so long after what happened here

270

On the twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six: ”
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street —
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.

Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,

280

And on the great church-window painted
 The same, to make the world acquainted
 How their children were stolen away,
 And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say

That in Transylvania there's a tribe
 Of alien people who ascribe
 The outlandish ways and dress
 On which their neighbors lay such stress,
 To their fathers and mothers having risen
 Out of some subterraneous prison
 Into which they were trepanned
 Long time ago in a mighty band
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
 But how or why, they don't understand.

290

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
 Of scores out with all men — especially pipers!
 And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

300

HERVÉ RIEL

I

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
 Did the English fight the French,— woe to France!

290. *Transylvania*: A province of Austria.

296. *trepanned*: Trapped.

1. **The Hogue**: A cape on the northern shore of France, just opposite the Isle of Wight. Here, on May 19, 1692, the French fleet was defeated in a running fight by the combined fleets of the English and the Dutch.

And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue
 Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
 Came crowding ship on ship to Saint Malo on the Rance,
 With the English fleet in view.

II

'T was the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;
 First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;
 Close on him fled, great and small,
 Twenty-two good ships in all; 10
 And they signalled to the place
 " Help the winners of a race!
 Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick —
 or, quicker still,
 Here's the English can and will! "

III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;
 " Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass? " laughed they:
 " Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and scored,

3. **helter-skelter:** What impression of the flight does this word give?

4. Note the effect of the simile used.

5. **St. Malo:** A town on a small island at the mouth of the river Rance, in Brittany.

17. What does the poet mean by saying the passage is " scarred and scored "?

Shall the 'Formidable' here with her twelve and eighty
guns
 Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow
 way,
Trust to enter where 't is ticklish for a craft of twenty
 tons, 20
 And with flow at full beside?
 Now, 't is slackest ebb of tide.
 Reach the mooring? Rather say,
While rock stands or water runs,
 Not a ship will leave the bay! ''

IV

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate:
"Here's the English at our heels; would you have them
 take in tow
All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and
 bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound? 30
Better run the ships aground! ''
 (Ended Damfreville his speech).
"Not a minute more to wait!
 Let the Captains all and each
 Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the
 beach!
France must undergo her fate.

18. twelve and eighty: A literal translation of the French *quatre-vingt-douze*.

22. slackest ebb of tide: The tide at St. Malo rises forty-five or fifty feet.—*Rolfe*.

30. Plymouth: An important naval station in the southwest of England.

V

“ Give the word! ” But no such word
 Was ever spoke or heard;
 For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid
 all these
 — A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate — first, second,
 third? 40
 No such man of mark, and meet
 With his betters to compete!
 But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville
 for the fleet,
 A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

VI

And “ What mockery or malice have we here? ” cries
 Hervé Riel:
 “ Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards,
 fools, or rogues?
 Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the sound-
 ings, tell
 On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
 'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river
 disembogues?

43. **pressed:** Forced to serve.

Tourville: A French admiral, who two years before had de-
 feated the English and Dutch fleets, and chased the English fleet
 to the very mouth of the Thames. A year after the battle of La
 Hogue he triumphed over the English at Cape St. Vincent.

44. **Croisickese:** A dweller in Le Croisic, a small fishing village
 on the Loire.

46. **Malouins:** Inhabitants of St. Malo. There was evidently
 no love lost between the pilots of these towns.

47. How are “ soundings ” taken?

49. **offing:** That part of the visible sea which is beyond anchor-
 age-ground. In the offing the water is deep and there is no need of
 a pilot.

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying's
for? 50

Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse
than fifty Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, be-
lieve me there's a way!

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this 'Formidable' clear,

Make the others follow mine,

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know
well, 60

Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound;

And if one ship misbehave,

— Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why, I've nothing but my life,— here's my head! " cries
Hervé Riel.

VII

Not a minute more to wait.

" Steer us in, then, small and great!

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron! " 70
cried its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

Still the north-wind, by God's grace!

See the noble fellow's face

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's
profound!

See, safe through shoal and rock,
How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the
ground,
Not a spar that comes to grief!

The peril, see, is past, 80
All are harbored to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!"—sure as
fate,
Up the English come — too late!

VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm:

They see the green trees wave
On the heights o'erlooking Grève.

Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.

"Just our rapture to enhance,
Let the English rake the bay,
Gnash their teeth and glare askance 90
As they cannonade away!

'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"
How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's counte-
nance!

Out burst all with one accord,
"This is Paradise for Hell!

Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!"

What a shout, and all one word,
"Hervé Riel!"

As he stepped in front once more, 100

75. profound: Latin, *profundus*, deep, from *pro*, forth, and *fundus*, bottom. Here, fathomless depth.

Not a symptom of surprise
 In the frank blue Breton eyes,
 Just the same man as before.

IX

Then said Damfreville, “ My friend,
 I must speak out at the end,
 Though I find the speaking hard.
 Praise is deeper than the lips:
 You have saved the King his ships,
 You must name your own reward.

’Faith, our sun was near eclipse! 110
 Demand whate’er you will,
 France remains your debtor still.
 Ask to heart’s content and have! or my name’s not
 Damfreville.”

X

Then a beam of fun outbroke
 On the bearded mouth that spoke,
 As the honest heart laughed through
 Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
 “ Since I needs must say my say,

Since on board the duty’s done,
 And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it
 but a run? — 120

Since ’t is ask and have, I may —

Since the others go ashore —
 Come! A good whole holiday!

Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle
 Aurore! ”

That he asked and that he got,— nothing more.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post

In his Croisic keeps alive thefeat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing-smack, 130
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
All that France saved from the fight whence England bore the bell.

Go to Paris: rank on rank

Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!

You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.

So, for better and for worse,
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!

In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the
Belle Aurore! 140

PHEIDIPIIDES

Xaípēte, νικῶμεν:

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!
Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes, honor to all!

134. **heroes flung pell-mell**, etc. Allusion is here made to the historical portraits in the Louvre, the celebrated art gallery of France.

Xaípēte, νικῶμεν: “Rejoice, we conquer.” After Marathon this was the usual Greek form of salutation.

2. **dæmons**: According to the Greek belief, spirits holding a place midway between the gods and men.

Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in
praise

— Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and
spear!

Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer,
Now, henceforth and forever,— O latest to whom I up-
raise

Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture
and flock!

Present to help, potent to save, Pan — patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!
See, 'tis myself here standing alive, no spectre that
speaks!

10

4. **Zeus:** The supreme deity of the Greeks, corresponding to the Roman Jupiter.

Her of the ægis and spear: Pallas Athena (the Roman Minerva), goddess of wisdom and the protector of Athens. The ægis was a wonderful shield given her by Zeus.

5. **ye of the bow and the buskin:** Phoebus Apollo and Artemis, or Diana. Diana is always represented as wearing buskins, or laced hunting-boots, reaching halfway to the knee.

8. **Pan:** A Greek woodland spirit; god of the hills and the woods, and of shepherds and their flocks, guardian of bees, and patron of hunters and fishers. He is generally represented as having the body of a man and the legs, horns, and tail of a goat, and as playing upon a reedy shepherd's pipe, his own invention. He had the power of causing sudden and senseless fear; hence the word *panic*. It was said that he brought about the victory at Marathon by causing panic among the Persians. In this connection, Mrs. Browning's poems, *A Musical Instrument* and *The Death of Pan*, should be read.

9. **Archons:** Chief magistrates of Athens.

tettix: A golden grasshopper worn in the hair by Athenian magistrates to signify their descent from the original inhabitants of the country, the grasshopper being supposed to spring from the ground.

Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens
and you,
“ Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid !
Persia has come, we are here, where is She ? ” Your
command I obeyed,
Ran and raced : like stubble, some field which a fire runs
through,
Was the space between city and city : two days, two
nights did I burn
Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke : breath served but for “ Persia
has come !
Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and
earth ;
Razed to the ground is Eretria — but Athens, shall
Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die — the flower of Hellas utterly
die, 20
Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid,
the stander-by ?
Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch
o'er destruction's brink ?
How,— when ? No care for my limbs ! — there's light-
ning in all and some —

12. **reach Sparta:** Nearly 140 miles from Athens.

14. “ **Fire in dry stubble a nine-days wonder flared.** ”

TENNYSON, *Lancelot and Elaine*.

18. **slaves'-tribute:** Water and earth were given to invaders
as tokens of submission.

19. **Eretria:** A city on the island of Euboea, about thirty
miles from Athens. It was captured by the Persians after a gal-
lant defense, and was razed to the ground

20. **Hellas:** Greece.

Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
 Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
 Malice,— each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified
 hate!

Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses.
 I stood

Quivering,— the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an
 inch from dry wood:

" Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they de-
 bate?" 30

Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry
 beyond

Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them
 ' Ye must '!"

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at
 last!

" Has Persia come,— does Athens ask aid,— may Sparta
 befriend?

Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue at
 stake!

Count we no time lost time which lags through respect
 to the gods!

Ponder that precept of old, ' No warfare, whatever the
 odds

In your favor, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable
 to take

32. **Phoibos:** Phoebus. Browning preferably retains the Greek spelling.

33. **Olumpos:** The early Greeks believed the home of the gods to be on the summit of Mt. Olympus in Thessaly.

Full-circle her state in the sky! ' Already she rounds
to it fast:

Athens must wait, patient as we — who judgment sus-
pend.''

40

Athens,— except for that sparkle,— thy name, I had
mouldered to ash!

That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away
was I back,

— Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false
and the vile!

Yet " O gods of my land! " I cried, as each hillock and
plain,

Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them
again,

" Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid
you erewhile?

Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too
rash

Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

" Oak and olive and bay,— I bid you cease to enwreathe
Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's
foot,

50

47. *filleted*: Adorned for the sacrifice with garlands or rib-
bons. Keats refers to this Greek custom in his *Ode to a Grecian
Urn*:

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Leadst thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest.

libation: Wine poured on the ground in honor of a god.

48. *Oak and olive and bay*: The oak was sacred to Zeus, the olive to Pallas Athene, and the bay, or laurel, to Apollo. A garland of wild olive was the only prize given to a winner in the Olympian games, while a wreath of bay was the much-coveted re-
ward of the successful poet.

You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn
a slave!

Rather I hail thee, Parnes,— trust to thy wild waste
tract!

Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if
slackened

My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave
No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can
breathe,

Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the
mute! ”

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar
Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.
Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure
across : 60

“ Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the
fosse?

Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebus,
thus I obey —

Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No
bridge

Better! ”— when — ha! what was it I came on, of won-
ders that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestical Pan!
Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his
hoof:

52. **Parnes:** A mountain north of Athens and outside of the route to Sparta. According to Herodotus the runner met Pan at Mt. Parthenium.

61. **fosse:** Latin *fossa*, a ditch. Here, a ravine.

62. **Erebus:** Erebus, a place of utter darkness between the Earth and Hades.

66. **Ivy.** Among the Greeks the ivy was held sacred. It was

All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly —
the curl

Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe,
As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.
" Halt, Pheidippides! " — halt I did, my brain of a
whirl: 70

" Hither to me! Why pale in my presence? " he gra-
cious began:

" How is it,— Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

" Athens, she only, rears me no fané, makes me no
feast!

Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more help-
ful of old?

Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust
me!

Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have
faith

In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, ' The
Goat-God saith:

When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is cast
in the sea,

Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your
most and least,

Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the
free and the bold! 80

" Say Pan saith: ' Let this, foreshowing the place, be
the pledge! ' "

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear

consecrated to Apollo, and Bacchus was profusely decorated
with it.

wanton: Loose.

80. greaved-thigh. Greaves were armor for the legs.

— Fennel — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — whatever
it bode)

“ While, as for thee ” . . . But enough! He was
gone. If I ran hitherto —

Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer,
but flew.

Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road:
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the
razor’s edge!

Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon
rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. “ And thee, best runner of
Greece,

Whose limbs did duty indeed,— what gift is promised
thyself? 90

Tell it us straightway,— Athens the mother demands of
her son ! ”

Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at
length

His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the
rest of his strength

Into the utterance — “ Pan spoke thus: ‘ For what
thou hast done

Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed
thee release

From the racer’s toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in
pelf ! ”

83. **Fennel:** Greek, *Mάραθον*, a common plant with which the field of Marathon was overgrown.

bode: Foreshadowed.

87. **on the razor’s edge.** Meaning?

88. **guerdon:** Reward.

89. **Miltiades:** The Athenian general in command at the battle of Marathon.

“ I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to
my mind !
Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel
may grow,—
Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to dust, and, under
the deep,
Whelm her away forever ; and then,— no Athens to
save,— 100
Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave,—
Hie to my house and home ; and, when my children shall
creep
Close to my knees,— recount how the God was awful
yet kind,
Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding him
— so ! ”

Unforeseeing one ! Yes, he fought on the Marathon
day :
So, when Persia was dust, all cried “ To Akropolis !
Run, Pheidippides, one race more ! the meed is thy due !
'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout ! ” He flung
down his shield,
Ran like fire once more : and the space 'twixt the Fen-
nel-field
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs
through, 110
Till in he broke : “ Rejoice, we conquer ! ” Like wine
through clay,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died — the bliss !
So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of
salute

Is still “ Rejoice! ”— his word which brought rejoicing indeed.

So is Pheidippides happy forever,— the noble strong man

Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom a god loved so well;

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered to tell

Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,

So to end gloriously — once to shout, thereafter be mute:
“ Athens is saved! ”— Pheidippides dies in the shout for his meed. 120

THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

IT was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:

The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.

Had I said, “ Good folk, mere noise repels —
But give me your sun from yonder skies! ”

They had answered, “ And afterward, what else? ” 10

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep!

Naught man could do, have I left undone:
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

There's nobody on the house-tops now —
 Just a palsied few at the windows set;
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,
 At the Shambles' Gate — or, better yet,
 By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

20

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
 A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
 And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
 For they fling, whoever has a mind,
 Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

Thus I entered, and thus I go!

In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
 "Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
 Me?" — God might question; now instead,
 'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

30

INSTANS TYRANNUS

I

Of the million or two, more or less,
 I rule and possess,
 One man, for some cause undefined,
 Was least to my mind.

19. **Shambles:** Literally, a place where butchers kill animals. What does it mean here?

20. **trow:** Suppose, think.

27. **triumphs:** A triumph was originally a magnificent ceremony in honor of a victorious general; hence, any triumphal procession.

Instans Tyrannus: The threatening tyrant.

II

I struck him, he groveled of course —
 For, what was his force?
 I pinned him to earth with my weight
 And persistence of hate:
 And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
 As his lot might be worse. 10

III

“ Were the object less mean, would he stand
 At the swing of my hand!
 For obscurity helps him and blots
 The hole where he squats.”
 So, I set my five wits on the stretch
 To inveigle the wretch.
 All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,
 Still he couched there perdue;
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,
 Hid in roses my mesh, 20
 Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth:
 Still he kept to his filth.

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
 To his heart, did I press:
 Just a son or a mother to seize!
 No such booty as these.
 Were it simply a friend to pursue
 ’Mid my million or two,
 Who could pay me in person or pelf,
 What he owes me himself! 30

18. *perdue*: In concealment.

21. *cates*: Food, especially luxurious food.—*spilth*: An archaic word meaning excess of supply.

No: I could not but smile through my chafe:
 For the fellow lay safe
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
 — Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humor more great took its place
 At the thought of his face,
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
 The trouble uncouth
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
 To put out of its pain. 40
 And, "no!" I admonished myself,
 "Is one mocked by an elf,
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
 The gravamen's in that!
 How the lion, who crouches to suit
 His back to my foot,
 Would admire that I stand in debate!
 But the small turns the great
 If it vexes you,—that is the thing!
 Toad or rat vex the king? 50
 Though I waste half my realm to unearth
 Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan
 To extinguish the man.
 Round his creep-hole, with never a break,
 Ran my fires for his sake;
 Over-head, did my thunder combine
 With my underground mine:

44. **gravamen:** Burden of complaint, special grievance.
 47. **admire:** Wonder.

Till I looked from my labor content
To enjoy the event.

60

VII

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end ?
Did I say " without friend ? "
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast !
Where the wretch was safe prest !
Do you see ? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed !
— So, *I* was afraid !

THE LOST LEADER

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat —
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!

64. **targe**: A shield.

65. **boss**: The central projection of a shield.

69. Supply "as" before "my" and "was" before "complete."

2. riband: Ribbon.

5. doled: Emphasizes what idea?

8. purple: Royal robes.

We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye, 10
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,— they watch from their
 graves!
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
 — He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering,— not through his presence ;
 Songs may inspirit us,— not from his lyre ;
 Deeds will be done,— while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire: 20
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
 Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again !
 Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own ; 30
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

20. **still bidding crouch**, etc.: Reference is here made to the masses, for whose betterment the Liberals were striving.

30. Originally, “Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own.”

CAVALIER TUNES

I. MARCHING ALONG

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
 Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
 And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
 And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
 Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
 To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
 Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
 Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup 10
 Till you're—

CHORUS.— Marching along, fifty-score strong
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
 Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!

1. **Sir Byng:** A fictitious nobleman.
 2. **crop-headed Parliament:** The Royalists wore their hair long
 or in ringlets, while the Puritans cropped theirs close. In con-
 sequence, the Cavaliers contemptuously called the Puritans Round-
 heads. See line 10 of *Boot and Saddle*.

7. **Pym:** A leader of Parliament against Charles I.

carles: Churls, rustics — a term of contempt.

8. **parles:** Parleys.

“When in an angry *parle*

He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.”

— SHAKESPEARE.

10. **pasty:** A meat pie.

14. **Hampden:** A noted Parliamentary leader, famous for his
 resistance to the illegal ship-money tax laid by King Charles.

15. These men were leaders of the Puritan party. Young

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,

CHO.— Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls 20
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHO.— March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II. GIVE A ROUSE

KING CHARLES, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

CHO.— King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now? 10
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

Harry was the son of Sir Henry Vane, the King's Secretary of State. He joined the Parliamentary party in opposition to his father, and was beheaded in 1662 on a charge of treason.

16. **Rupert:** A Bavarian prince and a nephew of King Charles; a dashing Royalist leader in the Civil War.

23. **Nottingham:** A town where King Charles set up his standard at the beginning of the Civil War.

Rouse: Dr. Furness says: "A 'rouse' was originally a

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

CHO.— King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles! 20

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
 Rescue my castle before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.

CHO.— Boot, saddle, to horse, and away! ”

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
 “ God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —

CHO.— Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array: 10
 Who laughs, “ Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHO.— Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

large glass ('not past a pint,' as Iago says), in which a health was given." Here the word is applied to the health itself.

16. **Noll:** Oliver Cromwell, leader of the Parliamentary forces and later Lord Protector of England.

Originally entitled *My Wife Gertrude*. "Boots and Saddles" is the bugle call which summons cavalry to mounted drill.

11. **fay:** Faith.

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, " Nay!
 I've better counsellors; what counsel they?

CHO.— Boot, saddle, to horse, and away! ”

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
 Looking as if she were alive. I call
 That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
 Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
 " Frà Pandolf " by design, for never read
 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
 But to myself they turned (since none puts by
 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
 How such a glance came there; so, not the first
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
 Frà Pandolf chanced to say, " Her mantle laps
 Over my lady's wrist too much," or, " Paint
 Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 Half-flush that dies along her throat: " such stuff
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had

10

20

Ferrara: A city of Northern Italy whose Dukes were great patrons of art.

3. Fra: Brother. A friar's title. Fra Pandolf is a purely imaginary artist.

A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,— good! but
thanked

Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech —(which I have not)— to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"— and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
— E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet

44. **I gave commands:** Professor Corson once asked the poet whether he meant commands for her death. "Yes," replied Browning, "I meant that the commands were that she should be put to death." And then, after a pause, he added, as if the thought had just started in his mind, "Or he might have had her shut up in a convent." It is evident, then, that Browning had in mind the killing of a sweet soul, whether the body lived on or not.

The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretence
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

50

COUNT GISMOND

AIX IN PROVENCE

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
 Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
 Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
 Chose time and place and company
 To suit it; when he struck at length
 My honor, 'twas with all his strength.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
 All points to one, he must have schemed!
 That miserable morning saw
 Few half so happy as I seemed,
 While being dressed in queen's array
 To give our tourney prize away.

10

56. **Claus of Innsbruck:** Like Fra Pandolf, an imaginary artist.

Provence: A former province of Southern France.

11. **queen's array:** The robes of the Queen of Love and Beauty, who bestowed the prize upon the winner of a tournament. See *Ivanhoe*, chapters viii-ix.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
 To please themselves; 'twas all their deed,
 God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
 If showing mine so caused to bleed
 My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
 A word, and straight the play had stopped.

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen

20

By virtue of her brow and breast;
 Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
 As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
 Had either of them spoke, instead
 Of glancing sideways with still head!

But no: they let me laugh, and sing

My birthday song quite through, adjust
 The last rose in my garland, fling
 A last look on the mirror, trust
 My arms to each an arm of theirs,
 And so descend the castle-stairs —

30

And come out on the morning-troop

Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
 And called me queen, and made me stoop
 Under the canopy — (a streak
 That pierced it, of the outside sun,
 Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun) —

And they could let me take my state

And foolish throne amid applause
 Of all come there to celebrate
 My queen's-day — Oh I think the cause
 Of much was, they forgot no crowd
 Makes up for parents in their shroud!

40

Howe'er that be, all eyes were bent
 Upon me, when my cousins cast
 Theirs down; 'twas time I should present
 The victor's crown, but . . . there, 'twill last
 No long time . . . the old mist again
 Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
 With his two boys: I can proceed. 50
 Well, at that moment, who should stalk
 Forth boldly — to my face, indeed —
 But Gauthier, and he thundered, "Stay!"
 And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
 About her! Let her shun the chaste,
 Or lay herself before their feet!
 Shall she whose body I embraced
 A night long, queen it in the day?
 For honor's sake no crowns, I say!" 60

I? What I answered? As I live,
 I never fancied such a thing
 As answer possible to give.
 What says the body when they spring
 Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
 Strength on it? No more says the soul.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
 That I was saved. I never met
 His face before, but, at first view,
 I felt quite sure that God had set
 Himself to Satan; who would spend
 A minute's mistrust on the end?

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
 Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
 With one back-handed blow that wrote
 In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
 East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
 And damned, and truth stood up instead.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
 The heart of the joy, with my content 80
 In watching Gismond unalloyed
 By any doubt of the event :
 God took that on him — I was bid
 Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

Did I not watch him while he let
 His armorer just brace his greaves,
 Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
 The while ! His foot . . . my memory leaves
 No least stamp out, nor how anon
 He pulled his ringing gauntlets on. 90

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
 Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
 Prone as his lie, upon the ground :
 Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
 O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
 Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
 And said, "Here die, but end thy breath
 In full confession, lest thou fleet
 From my first, to God's second death ! 100

87. **Hauberk:** Generally, a coat of mail; here, a piece of armor for the protection of the neck.

Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied
To God and her," he said, and died.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
— What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers forever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

Over my head his arm he flung
Against the world; and scarce I felt
His sword (that dripped by me and swung) 110
A little shifted in its belt:
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

So 'mid the shouting multitude
We two walked forth to never more
Return. My cousins have pursued
Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten! May his soul find grace! 120

Our elder boy has got the clear
Great brow; though when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?
And have you brought my tercel back?
I just was telling Adela
How many birds it struck since May.

124. *Tercel*: A male falcon; used in mediæval times for hunting other birds.

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the Northwest died
away ;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz
Bay ;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar
lay ;
In the dimmest Northeast distance dawned Gibraltar
grand and gray ;
“ Here and here did England help me : how can I help
England ? ”— say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,

1. **Cape Saint Vincent:** On the southwestern coast of Portugal. Here Nelson won a great victory over the Spanish fleet.

3. **Trafalgar:** A cape on the southwestern coast of Spain. Off this point Nelson won his famous naval victory over the French, losing his life in the fight.

4. **Gibraltar:** The famous rock and fortress at the entrance of the Mediterranean ; a world-renowned British stronghold.

7. **Jove's planet:** Jupiter.

6. **bole.** Trunk.

While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England — now !

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows ! 10
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge —
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
— Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower ! 20

“ DE GUSTIBUS — ”

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,

7. chaffinch: The prettiest of English song birds.— *Burroughs.*

14-16. Having in mind Shakespeare and Shelley, I nevertheless think the last three lines the finest ever written touching the song of a bird.— *Stedman.*

“ De Gustibus ”: From the old Latin proverb. “ *De gustibus non est disputandum —* ” About tastes there is no disputing.

4. cornfield-side: Not Indian corn. The poet has in mind a field of wheat or similar grain.

5. coppice: Copse, thicket.

Making love, say,—
The happier they!

Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,

10

With the beanflowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree — 'tis a cypress — stands
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, forever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day — the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,

20

30

22. *cicala*: The cicada, a kind of locust, which gives forth a characteristic grating sound.

Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
 — She hopes they have not caught the felons.
 Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me —

40

(When fortune's malice
 Lost her, Calais),

Open my heart and you will see
 Graved inside of it, " Italy."
 Such lovers old are I and she:
 So it always was, so shall ever be!

SONGS FROM " PIPPA PASSES "

I

ALL service ranks the same with God:
 If now, as formerly he trod
 Paradise, his presence fills
 Our earth, each only as God wills
 Can work — God's puppets, best and worst,
 Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not " a small event! " Why " small " ?
 Costs it more pain that this, ye call

37. **Bourbon:** The Bourbons were a royal house of Europe, members of which at one time or another occupied the thrones of France, Spain, and Naples. It was said of them that they never learned anything and never forgot anything. The term Bourbonism has become a synonym for stubborn conservatism and reaction.

40. **Queen Mary's saying:** When Queen Mary lost Calais in her ill-starred war with France, England had not a foot of land left on the Continent. On her deathbed the Queen said to those around her: " When I am dead and my body is opened, ye shall find Calais written on my heart."

2. **as:** That is, *as when*.

A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

10

II

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven —
All's right with the world!

III

Give her but a least excuse to love me!

When — where —

How — can this arm establish her above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,

There already, to eternally reprove me?

(“ Hist! ” — said Kate the Queen:

But "Oh!" cried the maiden, binding her tresses.

“ ‘Tis only a page that carols unseen.

Crumbling your hounds their messes! ’’)

Is she wronged? — To the rescue of her honor,
My heart!

10

Is she poor? — What costs it to be styled a donor?

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.

But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!

(“Nav, list!”—bade Kate the Queen:

And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses.

14. all this: That is, her high rank.

“ ‘Tis only a page that carols unseen,
Fitting your hawks their jesses! ’”)

IV

Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was naught above me, naught below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
— Ay, and of beasts,— but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one, 10
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
“ Praise God! ” sang Theocrite.

18. **jesses:** Short straps of leather or other material fastened to the leg of a hunting-hawk, to which are attached the bells or the leash by which the hawk is held.

10. **the seven and one:** “The seven” are doubtless the Pleiades, dear to the heart of every child; the “one” is perhaps Pipa’s favorite star. The Camberwell Edition suggests that the “one” may be Aldebaran (the follower), so-called because it follows the Pleiades. It is in the group called the Hyades, which with the Pleiades forms part of the constellation Taurus.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, long and well ;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, " Praise God ! "

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

10

Said Blaise, the listening monk, " Well done ;
I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

" As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

" This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, " Would God that I
Might praise him that great way, and die ! "

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

20

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, " Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

16. **Peter's dome**: St. Peter's cathedral in Rome.

25. **Gabriel**: An archangel, God's messenger.

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite. 30

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;
There is no doubt in it, no fear: 40

"So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery, 50

49. **tiring-room:** The room where the Pope was "dight," or attired, with his "holy vestments."

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear,
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

60

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

“ I bore thee from thy craftsman’s cell,
And set thee here ; I did not well.

“ Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

“ Thy voice’s praise seemed weak ; it dropped —
Creation’s chorus stopped !

“ Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain.

70

“ With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up creation’s pausing strain.

“ Back to the cell and poor employ :
Resume the craftsman and the boy ! ”

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

(As distinguished by an Italian person of quality)

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-
square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window
there!

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than
a beast.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned
wool.

10

But the city, oh, the city — the square with the houses!
Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something
to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;

Person of quality: A person of noble birth.

4. Bacchus: The Roman god of wine, whose name is often invoked in Italian speech.

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who
hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun
gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted
properly.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by
rights,

'Tis May, perhaps, ere the snow shall have withered well
off the heights:

You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen
steam and wheeze,

And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive-
trees. 20

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at
once;

In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April
suns.

'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
fingers well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red
bell

Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick
and sell.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout
and splash!

In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-
bows flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
paddle and pash

28. *pash*: The noun "pash" means a heavy dash of rain.

Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do not
abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist
in a sort of sash. 30

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you
linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted
forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and
mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem
a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is
shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resin-
ous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,— I spare you the months of the
fever and chill.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-
bells begin :
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in :
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a
pin. 40
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets
blood, draws teeth ;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.

Here used to suggest the beating of the water by the hoofs of a
horse.

29. **conch**: A large marine shell; here forming a part of the
symbolic decoration of the fountain.

39. **diligence**: A public stagecoach.

42. **Pulcinello**: Punchinello, a character in an Italian bur-
lesque, or puppet show, and the original of the English Punch.

At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play,
piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal
thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of re-
bukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new
law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
So-and-so,
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and
Cicero,
“ And moreover,” (the sonnet goes rhyming,) “ the
skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more un-
tuous than ever he preached.” 50
Noon strikes,— here sweeps the procession! our Lady
borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
stuck in her heart!

48. **Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca:** Three of the greatest names in Italian literature. Dante, author of the *Divina Commedia*, is one of the world's greatest poets. Boccaccio is a famous story-teller, whose works strongly influenced writers of other lands. Petrarch is a lyrical poet, especially celebrated for his fine sonnets.

Saint Jerome: One of the fathers of the Roman Church and a celebrated scholar. Among his works is the Latin translation of the Bible known as the *Vulgate*.

Cicero: A distinguished Roman orator and writer of the age of Julius Cæsar.

49. **the skirts of St. Paul has reached:** Has equaled St. Paul as a preacher.

51. **Our Lady:** The Virgin Mary.

52. **seven swords:** One for each of the seven legendary sorrows of the Virgin.

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
 No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in life.
 But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
 They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate
 It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
 Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still — ah, the pity, the pity!
 Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
 And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles; 60
 One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
 And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
 Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

THAT second time they hunted me
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,

56. **passing the gate:** In the old Italian cities the revenues were collected at the city gates and all provisions were heavily taxed. Salt and oil, being universally used, were prolific sources of income for the Dukes.

60. **yellow candles:** Symbols of penitence.

And Austria, hounding far and wide
 Her blood-hounds through the country-side,
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
 I made six days a hiding-place
 Of that dry green old aqueduct
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
 The fire-flies from the roof above,
 Bright creeping through the moss they love : 10
 — How long it seems since Charles was lost !
 Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
 The country in my very sight ;
 And when that peril ceased at night,
 The sky broke out in red dismay
 With signal fires ; well, there I lay
 Close covered o'er in my recess,
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,
 And Charles's miserable end, 20
 And much beside, two days ; the third,
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
 The peasants from the village go
 To work among the maize ; you know,
 With us in Lombardy, they bring
 Provisions packed on mules, a string,
 With little bells that cheer their task,
 And casks, and boughs on every cask
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine ;

8. **Charles:** Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano, who at first supported the revolutionary movement but later abandoned it. His having played with the patriot in his youth is quite possible, for Charles was brought up as a simple citizen in a public school.
— Camberwell Edition.

19. **Metternich:** A renowned Austrian diplomatist and an inveterate foe of Italian liberty.

20. **Charles's miserable end.** Meaning ?

These I let pass in jingling line,
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
 The peasants from the village, too ;
 For at the very rear would troop
 Their wives and sisters in a group
 To help, I knew. When these had passed
 I threw my glove to strike the last,
 Taking the chance: she did not start,
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
 One instant rapidly glanced round,
 And saw me beckon from the ground ;
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt ;
 She picked my glove up while she stripped
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest
 With that; my glove lay in her breast.
 Then I drew breath: they disappeared :
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.
 Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me
 Rested the hopes of Italy ;
 I had devised a certain tale
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
 Persuade a peasant of its truth ;
 I meant to call a freak of youth
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
 And no temptation to betray.
 But when I saw that woman's face,
 Its calm simplicity of grace,
 Our Italy's won attitude
 In which she walked thus far, and stood,
 Planting each naked foot so firm,
 To crush the snake and spare the worm —
 At first sight of her eyes, I said,

30

40

50

60

“ I am that man upon whose head
They fix the price, because I hate
The Austrians over us: the State
Will give you gold — oh, gold so much! —
If you betray me to their clutch,
And be your death, for aught I know,
If once they find you saved their foe.
Now, you must bring me food and drink,
And also paper, pen and ink,
And carry safe what I shall write
To Padua, which you’ll reach at night
Before the duomo shuts; go in,
And wait till Tenebræ begin;
Walk to the third confessional,
Between the pillar and the wall,
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
Say it a second time, then cease;
And if the voice inside returns,
From Christ and Freedom; what concerns
The cause of Peace? — for answer, slip
My letter where you placed your lip;
Then come back happy we have done
Our mother service — I, the son,
As you the daughter of our land! ”

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes :
I was no surer of sunrise
Than of her coming. We conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard

75. **duomo**: The cathedral.
77. **Tenebræ**: Services held on certain afternoons and evenings of Holy Week, in memory of the darkness during the sufferings and death of Christ. At these services it is customary to gradually darken the church.

She had a lover — stout and tall,
 She said — then let her eyelids fall,
 “ He could do much ”— as if some doubt
 Entered her heart,— then, passing out,
 “ She could not speak for others, who
 Had other thoughts; herself she knew: ”
 And so she brought me drink and food.

After four days, the scouts pursued
 Another path; at last arrived
 The help my Paduan friends contrived
 To furnish me: she brought the news.
 For the first time I could not choose
 But kiss her hand, and lay my own
 Upon her head — “ This faith was shown
 To Italy, our mother; she
 Uses my hand and blesses thee.”
 She followed down to the sea-shore;
 I left and never saw her more.

100

110

How very long since I have thought
 Concerning — much less wished for — aught
 Beside the good of Italy,
 For which I live and mean to die!
 I never was in love; and since
 Charles proved false, what shall now convince
 My inmost heart I have a friend?
 However, if I pleased to spend
 Real wishes on myself — say, three —
 I know at least what one should be.
 I would grasp Metternich until
 I felt his red wet throat distill
 In blood through these two hands. And next
 — Nor much for that am I perplexed —
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
 Should die slow of a broken heart

120

Under his new employers. Last
 — Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
 Do I grow old and out of strength.

If I resolved to seek at length

130

My father's house again, how scared
 They all would look, and unprepared!

My brothers live in Austria's pay

— Disowned me long ago, men say;

And all my early mates who used

To praise me so — perhaps induced

More than one early step of mine —

Are turning wise: while some opine

“ Freedom grows license,” some suspect

“ Haste breeds delay,” and recollect

140

They always said, such premature

Beginnings never could endure!

So, with a sullen “ All's for best,”

The land seems settling to its rest.

I think then, I should wish to stand

This evening in that dear, lost land,

Over the sea the thousand miles,

And know if yet that woman smiles

With the calm smile; some little farm

She lives in there, no doubt: what harm

150

If I sat on the door-side bench,

And, while her spindle made a trench

Fantastically in the dust,

Inquired of all her fortunes — just

Her children's ages and their names,

And what may be the husband's aims

For each of them. I'd talk this out,

And sit there, for an hour about,

Then kiss her hand once more, and lay

Mine on her head, and go my way.

160

So much for idle wishing — how
It steals the time! To business now.

MEMORABILIA

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at —
My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

10

For there I picked up on the heather,
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forgot the rest.

EVELYN HOPE

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:

The shutters are shut, no light may pass
 Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died !
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ; 10
 It was not her time to love ; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,
 Duties enough and little cares,
 And now was quiet, now astir,
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
 What, your soul was pure and true,
 The good stars met in your horoscope,
 Made you of spirit, fire and dew — 20
 And, just because I was thrice as old
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
 Each was naught to each, must I be told ?
 We were fellow mortals, naught beside ?

No, indeed ! for God above
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
 And creates the love to reward the love :
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few : 30
 Much is to learn, much to forget
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,— at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)

19. **horoscope**: The aspect of the heavens at the moment of one's birth, with special reference to the position of the planets. From this the astrologers professed to foretell one's future.

In the lower earth, in the years long still,
 That body and soul so pure and gay?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red —
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 In the new life come in the old one's stead. 40

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
 Given up myself so many times,
 Gained me the gains of various men,
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
 Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
 Either I missed or itself missed me:
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
 What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!
 My heart seemed full as it could hold; 50
 There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
 And the red young mouth, and the hair's young
 gold.
 So, hush,— I will give you this leaf to keep:
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
 There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
 You will wake, and remember, and understand.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I SAID — Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
 Since now at length my fate I know,
 Since nothing all my love avails,
 Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
 Since this was written and needs must be —

My whole heart rises up to bless
 Your name in pride and thankfulness!
 Take back the hope you gave,— I claim
 Only a memory of the same,
 — And this beside, if you will not blame, 10
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
 Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
 When pity would be softening through,
 Fixed me a breathing-while or two
 With life or death in the balance: right!
 The blood replenished me again;
 My last thought was at least not vain:
 I and my mistress, side by side
 Shall be together, breathe and ride, 20
 So, one day more am I deified.
 Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
 All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
 By many benedictions — sun's
 And moon's and evening-star's at once —
 And so, you, looking and loving best,
 Conscious grew, your passion drew
 Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
 Down on you, near and yet more near, 30
 Till flesh must fade for heaven was here! —
 Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear!
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
 Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
 Freshening and fluttering in the wind.

Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry ?

Had I said that, had I done this,

So might I gain, so might I miss.

40

Might she have loved me ? just as well

She might have hated, who can tell !

Where had I been now if the worst befell ?

And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?

Why, all men strive, and who succeeds ?

We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,

Saw other regions, cities new,

As the world rushed by on either side.

I thought,— All labor, yet no less

50

Bear up beneath their unsuccess.

Look at the end of work, contrast

The petty done, the undone vast,

This present of theirs with the hopeful past !

I hoped she would love me ; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired ?

What heart alike conceived and dared ?

What act proved all its thought had been ?

What will but felt the fleshly screen ?

We ride and I see her bosom heave.

60

There's many a crown for who can reach.

Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !

The flag stuck on a heap of bones,

A soldier's doing ! what atones ?

They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.

My riding is better, by their leave.

38. **with**: Against.

61. **who**: Whoever.

64. **atonement**: Compensates.

65. **Abbey-stones**: The monuments in Westminster Abbey.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
 What we felt only; you expressed
 You hold things beautiful the best,

70

And place them in rhyme so, side by side.

'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
 Have you yourself what's best for men?
 Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —
 Nearer one whit your own sublime
 Than we who never have tuned a rhyme?

Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor — so, you gave
 A score of years to Art, her slave,
 And that's your Venus, whence we turn
 To yonder girl that fords the burn!

80

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
 What, man of music, you grown gray
 With notes and nothing else to say,
 Is this your sole praise from a friend,
 "Greatly his opera's strains intend,
 But in music we know how fashions end!"

I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
 Proposed bliss here should sublimate
 My being — had I signed the bond —
 Still one must lead some life beyond,

90

Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
 This foot once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I descry such? Try and test!
 I sink back shuddering from the quest.

90. sublimate: Purify.

96. Such what?

Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet — she has not spoke so long! 100

What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,

We, fixed, so ever should so abide?

What if we still ride on, we two,

With life forever old yet new,

Changed not in kind but in degree,

The instant made eternity,—

And heaven just prove that I and she

Ride, ride together, forever ride? 110

PROSPICE

FEAR death? — to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall, 10
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
The best and the last!

101. that: introduces the clause "we, fixed so, etc."

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
 And bade me creep past.
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness and cold. 20
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest!

EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

AT the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where — by death, fools think, im-
 prisoned —
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved
 so,
 — Pity me?

Oh, to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
 What had I on earth to do

16. Note the force of the word *creep*.
17. **fare:** Go forward.
19. **life's arrears:** The debt he owes life.
23. **fiend-voices:** An allusion to the mediaeval belief that at death angelic spirits and fiends of darkness struggled for possession of the departing soul.
5. Will they pity me?

With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drive!

— Being — who?

10

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,

Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time

Greet the unseen with a cheer!

Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,

“ Strive and thrive! ” cry “ Speed,— fight on, fare ever
There as here! ”

20

8. **mawkish:** Insipid; sentimentally fastidious.

NOTES AND QUESTIONS

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX

Bells and Pomegranates. 1845

This poem is one of the fruits of Browning's trip to the Continent in 1838. "There is," says the poet, "no sort of historical foundation about *Good News from Ghent*. I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast, after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York' at home. It was written in pencil on the fly-leaf of Bartoli's *Simboli*, I remember."

1. In his opening stanza what does the poet make you feel about the mission of these riders? What suggestion in "sprang"? In the greeting of the watch? In the fact that they galloped even in the streets and through the postern? In the fact that they spoke "not a word to each other"?

2. (a) What character-hints regarding the speaker in the second stanza? Why does he tighten the girth and adjust the stirrups and bridle? Do the other riders do this? (b) What hint concerning the horse in line 12?

3. (a) How far is it from Ghent to Lokeren? How will the mention of the villages through which they passed help readers familiar with the Low Countries? (b) What does the remark of Joris, after half a night's silence, show?

4. (a) Does not stanza iv help you to imagine yourself with the riders? How? (b) What further character-hints regarding Roland in lines 22-30? Why was "one sharp ear bent back" and the other "pricked out on his track"? What suggestion in the fact that his *fierce* lips shook the foam-flakes *upwards*?

5. (a) What effect does the death of the first horse have upon us? (b) How does stanza viii deepen our impression of what the ride meant to both horses and riders? Why does the sun

seem to them to "laugh a pitiless laugh"? Did you ever cross a stubble-field in August? (c) How is it that they are riding through a stubble-field instead of on the highway? What suggestion in "sprang"? In "gasped"?

6. (a) In the beginning of the poem in what were you chiefly interested? When the horses of Dirck and Joris have died, upon what do you find your interest centered? (b) How does Browning (ll. 43-44) bring out the superior mettle of the second horse? What is brought out by lines 47-48?

7. What does Browning bring out in lines 49-53 about the rider? Why does he not tell us the horse's pet name? What pet name would you give your favorite horse?

8. What was the condition of the rider at the end of the ride? What, then, of the horse that had carried him? What is shown by the exhausted rider's giving his horse the "last measure of wine"? (b) Why was this horse willing to run himself to death's door for his master? Do you care much for the "good news" now? What, then, is the real theme of the poem?

9. Is Roland still alive when the story is told? (Line 57.) Can you not picture the speaker telling the story with his hand on Roland's mane?

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

Bells and Pomegranates. 1842

Abd-el-Kadr (Arabic, servant of the Mighty God), led the Arabs against the French invaders of Algeria. He proved himself a skillful and intrepid leader, and succeeded in firmly uniting all the Arab tribes. He waged war intermittently for sixteen years, but finally surrendered himself upon the promise of being allowed to retire to Alexandria. The French government, however, broke faith with him, and he spent the next five years in various French prisons. Louis Napoleon released him in 1852 on condition of his not returning to Algiers. He is said to have died in Mecca in 1873. Berdoe states that the poem is founded on an incident of the war when the Duke d'Aumale fell upon the Emir's camp and took several thousand prisoners. As a matter of fact, this event took place five years after the poem was published. At the time these verses were written all Europe was

ringing with the exploits of Abd-el-Kadr, but the historical purpose of the poem is only secondary.

1. (a) Who is the speaker? What is the purpose of the ride? What feeling possesses the rider? (b) How does this poem differ in movement from the preceding one? Why should this be so?

2. Compare the feeling of this rider for his horse (ll. 26-32) with that shown by the master of Roland.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

Bells and Pomegranates. 1842.

This poem originally formed the first part of *Camp and Cloister* under the title *I. Camp. II. Cloister* reappeared as *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, to which reference has been made in the Introduction.

This vivid little monologue is concerned with events connected with the siege of Ratisbon, stormed by Napoleon in 1809. The story is true, except that the hero was a man instead of a boy.

1. Who is telling the story? Can you imagine the circle of listeners, at his fireside or at the village inn?

2. Have you ever seen a full-length portrait of Napoleon? Does the description in the first stanza enable you to "fancy how" he looked on this battle day?

3. (a) What side of Napoleon is shown by his musings? (b) What is your only interest in the rider at first? When does your personal interest in him begin? What does Browning gain by the change which he makes in the story?

4. What striking character-hints in the third stanza? What new and surprising evidence of heroism in lines 29-31? Where is your interest now?

5. (a) What prevents the Emperor's seeing the boy's condition at once? What trait of Napoleon comes out in lines 33-36? (b) What characteristics of Napoleon's soldiers does the boy typify?

6. How does the plan of this poem resemble that of *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*?

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

Bells and Pomegranates. 1842

This fanciful poem was written for "Willy" Macready, the son of the famous actor who had produced Browning's drama, *Stratford*, a few years before. The lad was just recovering from illness and, being clever with his pencil, asked Browning for a poem to illustrate. To this fact we owe what Stedman calls "the daintiest bit of folk-lore in English verse."

Dr. Furnivall believes that the poet got the idea of the poem from an old book of the seventeenth century, entitled *The Wonders of the Little World*. The story, however, is a very old one, going back to ancient mythology and appearing even in the folk-lore of Persia and China.

The simplicity and naïve humor of the poem have made it a household favorite all over the English-speaking world. It affords many illustrations of the grotesque rhymes in which Browning occasionally indulged when he was in a sportive mood.

HERVÉ RIEL

Cornhill Magazine. 1871

In 1692, Louis XIV of France, intent upon restoring James II to the throne of England, gathered a great fleet for a descent upon the English coast. On May 16 of that year the combined fleets of England and Holland decisively defeated the French fleet in the battle of La Hogue and took from France the mastery of the sea. The exploit of Hervé Riel is essentially historical and is duly set down in the records of the French admiralty. It was not a day's holiday, however, which the bluff Breton sailor chose, but a holiday for life.

The hundred pounds received for *Hervé Riel* from the *Cornhill Magazine* were very appropriately contributed by Browning to the relief fund for the distressed citizens of Paris after its fall in 1871. The poem had been written four years before at Le Croisic, the former home of Hervé Riel.

In this poem, Browning, contrary to his usual custom, speaks in his own person.

1. What does the poet let the reader know in the first two lines? How does he bring out the condition of the French fleet? What is shown by line 8?
2. (a) Why do the Malouins refuse to take the ships into the harbor? (b) Why does the Admiral propose to burn the fleet?
3. (a) What is particularly good (ll. 38-43) in Browning's introduction of his hero? Why does he mention that Hervé Riel was a "poor coasting-pilot" and that he was "pressed" for the fleet? (b) What strong character hints in the sixth stanza? Why did he choose the biggest and hardest ship to steer? How do lines 73-75 emphasize the pilot's skill and daring?
4. (a) What still holds our attention after the ships are safe in the harbor? What additional character hints in lines 100-103 and 114-117? In his reply to the Admiral? (b) What does Browning gain by his departure from historical fact?

PHEIDIPIIDES

Dramatic Idyls. 1879

This stirring poem is based upon a story told in slightly varying form by Herodotus, Pausanias, and Cornelius Nepos.

When Athens was threatened by the Persians she sent a runner to Sparta to ask for aid. He covered the hundred and fifty miles between Athens and Sparta in two days but failed in his mission. In spite of his weariness he set out at once upon the return journey.

"And as to Pan," says Pausanias, "they say that Philippides reported that the Lacedæmonians were deferring their march, for it was their custom not to go out on a campaign till the full moon. But he said that he had met Pan near the Parthenian forest, and the god had said that he was a friend to the Athenians and would come out and help them at Marathon. For this message Pan has been much honored."

The part of Pheidippides in the battle of Marathon is Browning's creation.

1. Where is the speaker and whom is he addressing? What trait of Greek character is shown in the first eight lines?
2. (a) Show the force of the figures in lines 14-15. (b) What

were the relations of Athens and Sparta at this time? On what grounds, then, could aid be expected from Sparta? (c) What feeling is shown in lines 20-21? Was this the way to win Sparta?

(d) Why does Pheidippides exclaim, "No care for my limbs"? What is being done for him? (e) Explain lines 31-33. What does Pheidippides think of Sparta's excuse? In what tone does he repeat their reply?

3. (a) Explain lines 41-42. (b) Why does he renounce all the gods and turn from Olumpos to desolate Parnes? (c) What peculiar fitness in the use of the word "dive"?

4. (a) What impression does Pan make on Pheidippides? (b) What is prophetic in line 78? What does the gift of fennel signify? Does the runner understand this? How does he show his faith in Pan?

5. (a) What trait of character (1. 84) does the youth show by suddenly breaking off his story? (See also lines 92-93.) How did he interpret Pan's promise of reward? What was the real meaning?

6. Who is speaking from line 105 to the end? Did the Greeks regard the last run of Pheidippides as a task? Why did Browning think the runner's death blissful and glorious? What do you think of it?

7. (a) Show how this poem brings out strongly three typical characteristics of the Greeks. (b) Dowden has called Pheidippides "a graceful brother of the Breton sailor who saved a fleet for France." Show that this is well said.

THE PATRIOT

Men and Women. 1855

Browning's purpose here, as in *Through the Metidja*, is dramatic and not historical; he aims rather at setting forth a truth than at depicting an event.

1. (a) What different meanings might the sub-title have? (b) Under what circumstances does the speaker tell his story? (c) What had the people celebrated a year before? Explain lines 3-4.

2. Explain lines 9-10. What had the patriot tried to do?

3. (a) What is going on to-day? Why is there "nobody on

the housetops now"? Why are the palsied ones set at the windows? (b) What does the phrase "best of the sight" show about the popular feeling? What does the word "Shambles" suggest to the imagination?

4. (a) What sharp contrast is shown in the fifth stanza? What significance in the fact that the rope cuts his wrists "more than needs"? (b) Does the speaker really believe that the past year has been one of misdeeds? Who has changed, patriot or people?

5. (a) What danger does he see in dying in the hour of triumph? What enables him to view his own downfall so calmly? (b) What truth does the poet mean to teach? What, then, does he mean by "An Old Story"? Can you illustrate this truth from history?

INSTANS TYRANNUS

Men and Women. 1855.

The title of this poem was taken from one of Horace's Odes (Book iii, Ode 3), and the theme was doubtless suggested by the same passage:

Justum et tenacem proposti virum,
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni mente
Quatit solida.

The following metrical translation is by Gladstone:

"The just man in his purpose strong,
No madding crowd can turn to wrong,
The forceful tyrant's brow and word
.

His firm-set spirit cannot move."

This hateful king, whose "envy crawls into almost motiveless hatred," inevitably suggests the malignant monk of the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, who hated his brother monk for his very simplicity and sweetness of soul. The contrasted types in the two poems are almost identical.

1. (a) Who is the speaker? What impression of him do you get from the first stanza? From the second? (b) What motive actuated him at first? (Line 3.) What aggravated his feeling against his victim? What character hints regarding the latter in the second stanza?
2. What subtle means (ll. 23-30) does he next employ? What would he do (ll. 23-30) if it lay in his power? What baffles him? What is his idea of filth?
3. What suggestion in the fact that he goes about his last plan "soberly"? What is he beginning to feel?
4. (a) Explain the figurative description in lines 55-58. What does the tyrant confidently expect? Why does he finally fail utterly? Of what is he afraid at the end? Is his fear physical? (b) Does the victim necessarily escape the physical vengeance of the tyrant? What does the poem teach? Compare it with *The Patriot*.

THE LOST LEADER

Bells and Pomegranates. 1845

The early part of the nineteenth century was characterized by a spirit of revolution, making for progress and freedom in politics, in religion, and in literature. In England the leading Revolutionary poets were Wordsworth, Southey, Byron, Burns, Shelley, and Keats. In his later years, Wordsworth left the liberal cause and became a strong conservative, opposing both the Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bills. When this poem was published many supposed that it was a direct thrust at Wordsworth, but *The Lost Leader* was rather meant to typify all those who left the cause of Liberalism. Concerning this the poet has said in a letter: "I did in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or that particular feature may be selected or turned to account; had I intended more, above all such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about 'handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon.' These never influenced the change of politics in the great man. . . . So, though I dare not deny the origin of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the 'very effigies' of such a moral and intellectual superiority."

1. (a) What had been the relations of the "lost leader" and his followers? Had he led through his statesmanship? (Line 18.) What had caused his desertion? (b) Why does the poet not wish him to return?

2. What dominant trait of the poet comes out in the closing lines?

CAVALIER TUNES

Dramatic Lyrics. 1842

The stirring *Cavalier Tunes* are the only poems of the series entitled *Dramatic Lyrics* in which the subject is taken from English life. They breathe the very spirit of the dashing Cavaliers who followed King Charles the First, even to the death. The third song was originally entitled *My Wife Gertrude*.

1. (a) Why were the Cavaliers so called? What does the swing of the first song suggest? Under what circumstances is it being sung?

(b) What does this song show of the feeling of the Cavaliers toward the Puritans? (Ll. 2, 7, 14). Why is the idea of "gentlemen" emphasized?

2. (a) Picture the scene of the second song, an old banqueting hall, crowded with feasting Cavaliers. (b) What trait of the Cavaliers is voiced in the opening lines? (c) What characteristic of King Charles is brought out in the second stanza? What is one reason for the devotion of his followers? (d) What mingled feelings are expressed in the closing stanza?

3. (a) Under what circumstances is the third song sung? What better side of the Cavaliers comes out here? (b) If "wife Gertrude" shows such spirit, what of the Cavaliers themselves?

4. Was Browning in sympathy with the cause which the Cavaliers represented? (See *The Lost Leader*.) What, then, is his aim in these songs?

MY LAST DUCHESS

Bells and Pomegranates. 1842

This monologue is a marvel of condensation and suggestion. Professor Sherman says of it: "It is a five act tragedy in fifty

lines." The poem splendidly illustrates Browning's ability to present two contrasting types of character through the words of one of them.

The speaker is the Duke of Ferrara, typifying Italian character of the Renaissance, "at its best of intellectual, but at its worst, of spiritual culture." To secure a successor to his "last Duchess," he has summoned to his palace the representative of a Count, with whom he has been discussing preliminary arrangements as to dower, etc. As they are about to pass down the stairs he pauses, as if casually to show his visitor Fra Pandolf's wonderful masterpiece, but in reality to make clear to the emissary of the humbler Count what the great Duke of Ferrara expects of the future Duchess in the way of conduct.

1. Can you imagine the scene as the haughty Duke pauses at the top of the grand stair-case and draws the curtain from before the picture? For what does he chiefly prize the picture? Why does he permit none to put by the curtain but himself? (c) Why is he careful to say that a monk painted the picture?

2. What hints do we have of the physical beauty of the Duchess? (b) What do lines 20-31 show of her character? Was there anything to condemn in the actions he speaks of? (c) Was it only love for the Duchess that caused him jealously to resent her being "too soon made glad"? What hint of the true reason in lines 32-34? What attitude would he have had her take toward the rest of the world?

3. Do you think the Duke really had no skill of speech? What dominant trait of character kept him silent until at last his commands "stopped all smiles together"? (Line 42.) How does he seem to feel regarding his success in crushing the sweet, joyous soul of the Duchess?

4. (a) To what question does the Duke now return? Do you think the envoy would understand the purpose of the Duke's remarks concerning his "last Duchess"? (b) Explain the remark, "Nay, we'll go down together, sir." (c) What side of the Duke's character is brought out in his closing speech?

5. What impression has Browning given you of the character of the Duke? Of the Duchess?

COUNT GISMOND

Bells and Pomegranates. 1842

This monologue and the one entitled *My Last Duchess* originally had the common title *Italy and France*, the latter being called No. I. *Italy* and the former No. II. *France*. *Count Gismond* breathes the spirit of the days of chivalry, just as *My Last Duchess* reflects a certain type of the Renaissance period.

In *Count Gismond* we have another splendid example of Browning's power of suggestion and condensation. How much is left to the reader's imagination! What had led the cousins to form so dastardly a plot against this innocent, lovable girl? How could Count Gauthier play so despicable a part? Was he perhaps a rejected suitor? The heroine had never seen Gismond's face before; but had he not perhaps been watching hers all through the tourney week? It is a romance compressed into a hundred and twenty-five lines.

This poem is particularly remarkable for its force.¹ The opening lines and stanzas x–xiii, containing the climax, will be found especially striking in this regard. When the pupils have a sufficiently sympathetic understanding of the poem they should read it aloud to bring out this element.

1. (a) Who is the speaker and to whom is she telling the story? (Ll. 105–7.) What feeling does she show in the opening lines? (Read them aloud.) (b) How does Browning arouse our interest? What do we learn at once of Count Gismond and Count Gauthier?

2. (a) Why should Gauthier have schemed against her? Was he alone in his scheming? (Ll. 16–22.) (b) Who was dressing her in “queen’s array”? (c) Why does she call the morning “miserable”? What suggestion in “seemed”?

3. (a) Why should her cousins plot against her? What contrast between their beauty and hers? (Ll. 19–22.) What actions on their part does she feel most keenly? (b) How was the speaker regarded (stanza vi) by the other noble ladies and gentlemen? What does this help explain? (c) What is gained by introducing lines 34–36? (d) How do lines 40–42 affect your sym-

¹ See Sherman’s *Analytics of Literature*, pp. 15 and 375.

pathies? (e) What revelation of the speaker's character in these first seven stanzas?

4. (a) Explain the break in line 46. (b) Why does she say, "I can proceed"? (See also last stanza.) Note Browning's use of suspense at this point.

5. (a) What feeling does the speaker show by the exclamation, "to my face indeed"? (b) What does the listener ask after line 60? Why had the girl no answer to Gauthier's accusation? (c) How did the stranger knight *know* that she was innocent? How did she *know* that she was saved? What was the belief in the Middle Ages regarding trial by combat? (See *Ivanhoe*, Chapters xxxvii–xliv.)

6. (a) What significance in the use of the word "strode"? In the fact that the blow was back-handed? (b) How could she so calmly study the effect of the blow upon the crowd? What verdict did she read in men's faces?

7. (a) In what mood does she watch the combat? What significance in this? (b) Why was Gismond "on the fret"? Why should he stamp? Explain his impetuous rush upon Gauthier?

8. (a) Can you imagine the scene as Gismond drags Gauthier to her feet to gasp his confession from bloody lips? Why can she not repeat Gismond's words, even to her dearest friend? What character hint here?

9. (a) Why is it inevitable that Gismond should take her away? Could she remain longer at her uncle's court? (b) Is she glad to go? Why is she scarcely conscious of the dripping sword? (c) Can you imagine the scene suggested by lines 115–116?

10. (a) Explain lines 117–18. Does she yet understand why her cousins plotted against her? (b) What character hint in lines 119–20?

11. (a) What does she dwell on most in her sons? Can you complete the broken sentence? (b) Why is she so dismayed at her husband's sudden appearance? Why does she hide what she has been telling? Why has she never before told her friend the story? What does this show about Gismond? (c) What seems to you the purpose of the poem? Contrast Count Gismond and the Duke of Ferrara.

HOME-THOUGHTS FROM THE SEA

Bells and Pomegranates. 1845

These verses were suggested by the poet's passing Cape Trafalgar and Gibraltar on his voyage to Italy in 1838.

In this poem, as in the next two, Browning, contrary to his usual custom, speaks in his own person.

Where is the speaker supposed to be? What great events had happened in that part of the world? What inspiration do the thoughts of these events give him?

HOME-THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

Bells and Pomegranates. 1845

As first printed this title embraced two other poems, the one now known as *Home-Thoughts from the Sea* and *Here's to Nelson's Memory*. The last mentioned poem was later published as the third part of *Nationality in Drinks*.

This poem is notable as containing one of the four references to English scenery to be found in all of Browning's poetry. One of these is in *De Gustibus*—, the next poem to be studied. Another is in *Pauline*, where the poet tells of

one warm morn, when winter
Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first breath
Blew soft from the moist hills; the black-thorn boughs,
So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,
Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the banks
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.

The fourth instance occurs in *The Inn Album*, where Browning describes

the great elm-tree in the open, posed
Placidly full in front, smooth bole, broad branch,
And leafage, one green plenitude of May.
 . . . bosomful
Of lights and shades, murmurs and silences,
Sun-warmth, dew-coolness, squirrel, bee, bird.

1. Where did Browning spend much of his life? What can you say of the climate and scenery of that country? Why should the coming of spring bring home-thoughts? What does he miss?

2. (a) How do lines 11-13 especially appeal to the imagination? Explain lines 14-16. (b) For what do the buttercups and "the gaudy melon-flower" respectively stand? (c) What lines do you like most? Which of the last two poems do you prefer? Why?

"DE GUSTIBUS —"

Men and Women. 1855

In this poem Browning contrasts some friend's preference for English scenery with his own love for that of Italy. He imagines that his friend's ghost will be found haunting an English lane, while his own will frequent some "wind-grieved Apennine" or some "blue breadth of sea" farther south.

1. Picture for yourself the first scene. What elements make up its beauty. Note the musical quality of lines 9-13.

2. How does the beauty of the second scene differ from that of the first? How does Browning here kindle the imagination? Note his effective use of phrases, such as "wind-grieved Apennine," "rough iron-spiked," etc. (b) Which picture pleases you most? What lines in each do you like best? (c) Show that the title is a fitting one.

SONGS FROM PIPPA PASSES

Bells and Pomegranates. 1841

Browning's most beautiful drama, *Pippa Passes*, was partially suggested by a visit of the poet to his much loved city of Asolo, in Italy. Mrs. Orr says that the idea of this poem came to Browning from his thinking of one passing through life, apparently too humble to have any influence, yet unconsciously affecting the lives of others.

Pippa, a little silk-weaver of Asolo, wakes early on New Year's Day, her one holiday,

"that lightens the next twelve-month's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil."

Planning how she may best spend this precious day, she decides to sit in turn outside the door of each of the grand folk whom she deems "the Happiest Four of our Asolo," and in fancy "taste of the pleasures" which she believes they have in full measure.

"The Happiest Four" are, in fact, anything but happy, for each is passing through a dark crisis at the very moment when Pippa sits outside, singing one of her simple heartfelt songs. In each case her song brings a transforming message to a soul ready to yield to the forces of evil. "Pippa passes" from place to place, and at nightfall, tired but happy, returns to her squalid attic, all unconscious that she has been "the messenger of good spiritual tidings to souls in dark places."

As Browning explains later in the drama, the third song refers to Caterina Cornaro,

who renounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
The power of doing good for "Kate the Queen."

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

Hood's Magazine. 1844

This simple poem embodies one of the poet's firmest convictions, a conviction voiced again in Pippa's New Year hymn:

All service ranks the same with God.

.

There is no last nor first.

In 1845 the poem was reprinted, with five new couplets, in *Bells and Pomegranates*. The closing couplet was added in 1868. The original poem ended thus:

"Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain.

Be again the boy all curl'd;
I will finish with the world.

Theocrite grew old at home;
Gabriel dwelt in Peter's dome."

1. (a) What is Theocrite's station in life? How does Browning help us see the boy? (b) What idea does Blaise put into the boy's head? How does it affect his life?
2. (a) Why does Gabriel take the boy's place? Does he succeed in his purpose? (b) What did God miss in Gabriel's song? Why must it necessarily lack "the little human praise"?
3. (a) What was Theocrite doing all the years that Gabriel spent as a craftsman? (b) On what do Theocrite's thoughts dwell as he prepares to praise God "the Pope's great way"? Of what should he have been thinking? (c) Why does the angel think that his mission has been in vain? What dream of Theocrite's has also proven vain? Why?
4. (a) Explain line 68. Explain the phrase, "that weak voice of disdain." What difference between Theocrite the boy and Theocrite the Pope? (b) Do you see what Browning wishes to teach by the poem? Do you like the closing lines better than those of the original version? Why?

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

Men and Women. 1855

In this poem we have Browning's humor at its best. You will look far before you find a finer example of self-revelation of character than is furnished by this short monologue.

1. (a) How do the title and sub-title prepare the reader for the poem? (b) What is made clear by the speaker's first sentence? What side of city life attracts him? (Lines 3-5.)
2. What would most people think of the situation of his villa? Explain line 10.
3. What light is thrown upon this nobleman's tastes by the fourth stanza? What sort of architecture might he have found to admire in any typical Italian city? What sort does he admire?
4. What would you say of the view from his villa? (Lines 19-20.) How does he like it? What especially attracts his attention (l. 25) to the wild tulip? What would *you* think of the fireflies in the hemp and the "tiresome whine" of the bees among

the first? What do his pet aversions in connection with country life show about this man?

5. (a) What do his remarks in the sixth stanza show about his taste? (b) What phases of city life arouse him most? (Lines 38-42). What striking character-hint in this? (c) What does he mean by "liberal thieves"? Where do his sympathies lie, politically?

6. (a) The speaker believes his favorite versifier the peer of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. Judging from the sample given, what do you think of his literary taste? (b) What is shown by his admiration of the figure representing the Sorrowful Virgin as "smiling and smart, with a pink gauze gown all spangles"? What does a religious procession mean to him? (Lines 59-62.) (c) What kind of music appeals to him? What kind might he have heard in any Italian city?

7. (a) How does his choice of figures reflect his mind? (Lines 7, 12, 25, 32.) (b) Sum up your impressions of this "person of quality." What would attract such a man in one of our cities? Do we find many of his type in present-day life?

MEMORABILIA

Men and Women. 1855.

This poem, originally entitled *Memorabilia* (*on seeing Shelley*), was composed on the Campagna in 1853. The influence of the "Sun-treader" on Browning's work has been touched upon in the Introduction.

Professor Corson says: The eagle feather causes an isolated flash of association with the poet of the atmosphere, the winds, and the clouds,

"The meteoric poet of air and sea."

How is the feeling of the speaker at once made plain? Why does Shelley mean so much more to him than to his friend? How is the indifference of the friend indicated? What does the eagle feather signify?

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

Bells and Pomegranates. 1845

After Napoleon's downfall the Powers reconstructed the map of Europe as far as possible upon the original lines. Lombardy and Venice were turned over to Italy and all the rest of Italy, except Sardinia, was placed under Austrian supervision. The petty tyrants were restored to their thrones and began at once relentlessly to repress the spirit of liberty. The Italian people, thoroughly impregnated with the revolutionary spirit, immediately began the long struggle for liberty and unity which was not to find its full fruition until half a century later.

The poet here reflects the spirit of Young Italy, the leading revolutionary party of the time. Browning was proud to remember that Mazzini, the leader of Young Italy, informed him that he had read this poem to his fellow-exiles in England to show them how an English poet could sympathize with their cause.

This poem was first published under the title *Italy in England*, its companion piece being *England in Italy*, later called *The Englishman in Italy*. You should read the latter poem.

1. (a) What does the title tell us of the speaker? Of what is he speaking? (b) How does Browning at once capture our sympathy for the fugitive? What is his rank? (1. 8.) (c) What is the meaning of line 11? (See line 116.)
2. (a) How does he feel (1. 31) towards the common people? (b) What does he mean by "taking the chance"? (L. 37.)
3. (a) What traits of character does the woman show upon being struck by the glove? (b) Why is line 46 introduced?
4. (a) What leads him to tell the woman the truth instead of the tale which he had devised? (b) What is shown about the state of Italy at that time by his instructions regarding the church at Padua? By her remarks concerning her lover?
5. (a) What is the exile's one aim in life? What is shown by his three cherished wishes? (b) Why should he wish to see this peasant woman instead of his own kindred?
6. What is the poet trying to make his readers feel about the Italians in their struggle with Austria? What does this peasant woman typify to the exile and to Browning? (See li. 57-62.)

EVELYN HOPE

Men and Women. 1855

“The words of a dreamer, wrung out of the sorrow of death: its keynote, a hope of fulfillment of love in other lives, not the knowledge of love in this life.—NETTLESHIP.

1. What does the poet accomplish in the opening stanza? What had been the relations of the speaker and the dead girl?

2. What great questions does Browning raise in the third and fourth stanzas? Compare Wordsworth's lines:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul, that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar.

3. What belief comforts the speaker in his great sorrow?

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

Men and Women. 1855

“The speaker is a man who has to give up the woman he loves; but his love was probably reciprocated, however inadequately, for his appeal for ‘a last ride together’ is granted. The poem reflects his changing moods and thoughts as ‘here we are riding, she and I.’—BROWNING SOCIETY PAPERS, V. 144.

1. (a) How much had the love of his mistress meant to the speaker? How does he feel about his future? In spite of this, what is his feeling towards her? (a) Does he hope to plead his love further on this “last ride together”? Why, then, does he desire it?

2. (a) What character-hints (ll. 12–14) regarding the woman? What is she debating in line 15? Why does it seem a matter of life and death to him? What will this ride mean to him hereafter? (b) What does the speaker try to make us feel in stanza iii?

3. (a) What change of mood do we already note in lines 37–38? Is this change for the better? (b) What worse might have befallen him? (Ll. 16–17.)

4. (a) What further source of comfort does he find? What of the truth of lines 50-54? (b) What must be the answer to the questions in stanza vi? Explain line 59. (c) Wherein does even the great poet fail? Why do we turn from the sculptor's masterpiece to the living girl? Why does the speaker refer again and again to the ride, each time with a feeling of greater content?

5. (a) What is your answer to the question in line 89? (b) What does he fear might have been the result had he gained her full love? (c) What will he now have to cherish all his life? In what sense will she ride with him forever? (d) What hope does eternity hold for him? Compare with *Evelyn Hope*.

6. Nettleship says: "The speaker has the courage to crush despair and ask a little favor which he made the foundation of a boundless ideal." Do you see what the critic means?

PROSPICE

Atlantic Monthly. 1864

Prospice ("Look forward") was written after the death of Mrs. Browning, to whom allusion is made in the closing lines. It is the poet's expression of his belief in immortality. Just before his death he wrote to a friend:

"You know as well as I that death is life, just as our daily, our momentarily dying body is none the less alive and ever recruiting new forces of existence. . . . Pshaw, it is foolish to argue upon such a thing even. For myself, I deny death as an end to anything. Never say of me that I am dead."

(a) Note the opening lines with their allusions to fog and snow and mist. What does the poet make us feel? What spirit (ll. 11-12) does he show? What attitude toward death does he especially scorn? Note the force of the word "creep." (b) Why does he feel that he owes life something? Does he doubt that it has been worth living? (See Corson's comment, page 29.) How will he pay the debt? (c) What calm faith is shown in the closing lines?

EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

1889

In this epilogue to *Asolando*, published on the day of Browning's death, we have the last word of the poet to the world. Here, speaking in his own proper person, he voices the animating spirit of his life and poetry.

One evening just before his last illness, as Browning was reading the proof-sheets of the poem to his sister and daughter-in-law, he paused after the third stanza and said: "It almost looks like bragging to say this, and as if I ought to cancel it; but it's the simple truth; and as it's true, it shall stand."

According to Browning, what spirit has animated his work from first to last? What evidence of this have you found in the poems read?

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

While it is true in a sense that "the method is the man himself," and that no hard-and-fast rules may be laid down for the teaching of a poem, yet a few suggestions, born of experience, may not be amiss.

Milton once said that "he who would aspire well to write of laudable things ought himself to be a true poem." It is equally true that he who would awake in others a love of poetry ought himself to appreciate and love it. Professor Corson has asserted with truth that "the best response to the essential life of a poem is to be secured by the fullest interpretative vocal rendering of it." Assuming, then, this appreciation on the part of the teacher, we advise him, first of all, to read the poem aloud to the class. If he can bring out in his reading something of the swing of the *Cavalier Tunes*, the humor of *Up at a Villa—Down in the City*, or the force of *Count Gismond*, half the battle is won. A proper reading, even without comment, is illuminating to the pupils and straightens out most of the twisted sentences which occasionally mar Browning's verse. In the case of the monologues, this reading also gives opportunity, through proper questioning and explanation, to bring out the dramatic setting.

A closer study of the poem will naturally follow. The appended questions are not necessarily to be taken up in the class one by one, but are meant rather to guide the pupil through suggestion to a true appreciation of the poem. They will often serve as "kindling hints" to the imagination, causing new questions to spring up in the mind. The editor's experience is, that their use develops in the pupil the ability to read other poems with increased appreciation and delight.

The various elements of poetic form, such as emotional words and phrases, figures, meter, rhythm, and tone quality, should not be neglected, but their discussion should be largely incidental to the interpretation of the poem. The selection and cataloguing of the figures of speech occurring in a given number of pages is indeed

a "wicked waste of time." After all, the things of most moment in Browning's poetry are his "living men and women" and his poetic message, and these elements should not be obscured by technical discussion of details of form.

Finally, the pupils themselves should read the poem aloud. The editor knows too well the difficulties that confront the teacher here; but the very fact that so many pupils read poetry poorly is the best reason why this side of the work should be emphasized. The teacher will naturally have the pupils commit to memory some entire poems and parts of others. In this work, accuracy of language and vividness of expression should be insisted upon. Parrot-like recitation is of comparatively little value. The teacher should not fail to read other poems of Browning to the class. The editor likes, too, for obvious reasons, to read a few selections from Mrs. Browning. For instance, *A Musical Instrument* and *The Death of Pan* fit in admirably with *Pheidippides*.

While the teacher's first aim should be to develop in the pupil a love of poetry, he will find in these poems excellent material for composition work. The pupils sometimes may be asked to write on the poem itself, making use of the suggestive questions as a running outline. They should be cautioned, however, not to make the composition a mere series of answers to the questions, but rather to use these as the basis of a connected discussion of the poem. A typical composition written by the teacher will be illuminating to the pupils. Again, character sketches may be written of the men and women who live in Browning's pages; for instance, a contrast may be drawn between Count Gismond and the Duke of Ferrara. The editor once said to his class: "Write a character sketch of 'the Italian person of quality' in *Up at a Villa—Down in the City*. Let each one do the work in his own way." One boy, who had lived both in the West and in the East, imagined himself telling his mates in a Montana country school of a "queer Italian nabob" who had once visited a Pennsylvania mining district. The boy, having been delegated by his father to show this distinguished visitor the sights, took him to a celebrated spot on a mountain side where there suddenly bursts on one's view miles and miles of green valley threaded by shining streams. The "person of quality" shrugged his shoulders and turned away unmoved, but later displayed great enthusiasm over a dreary

stretch of coal "strippings," when told of the wealth that there lay uncovered. This incident illustrates the possibilities that lie in this direction. The young teacher is cautioned, however, not to draw too largely upon the poems for composition subjects. Too many exercises of this sort may create antipathy for the poetry itself. Besides, material for composition work should be largely drawn from the life of the pupil. The streets and alleys and fields, as well as the home and the school, are full of subjects, and the pupil will write best when he writes of that in which he is most vitally interested.

THE END

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